



HOLDFAST

JULY 2015 - Number 27

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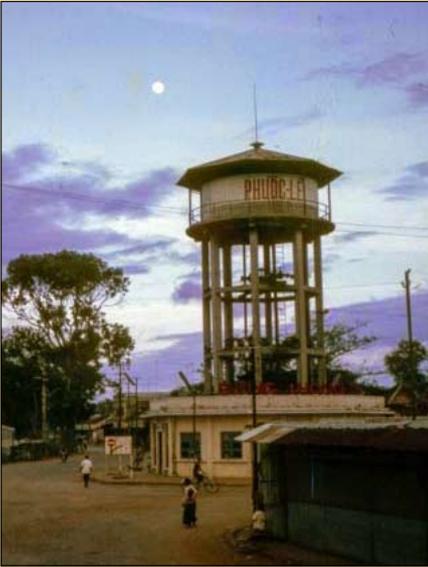
OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE TUNNEL RATS COMBAT ENGINEER ASSOCIATION INC



1CER Sappers honour our 1 Field Squadron Comrades

Following our remembrance ceremony in April this year at Nui Dat in Vietnam, current serving Combat Engineers from 1CER assemble behind the old ceremonial rock still in place at the former 1FD SQN HQ area. (Left to right: CPL Jack Downing, SPR Teagan Murphy, SPR Trent Prestage, SPR Jacob Webb, SPR Ryan Best, SPR Damon Hill, LT Stephanie Sheldon, SPR Lindsey Albion, SPR Guy Hill, SGT David Myers and L/CPL Bryce Maybury.

Nostalgia Pages



Pages of great pics from the past to amaze and amuse. Photo contributions welcome. Send your favourite Vietnam pics (with descriptions, names and approx dates) to Jim Marett 43 Heyington Place Toorak Vic 3142 or by email to: tunnelrat@optusnet.com.au



Scene of another lost Sapper

This APC, call sign 21A was severely damaged by a mine blast on 14 June 1970, killing Sapper Ian Scott of 2 Troop, 1 Field Squadron and wounding Trooper Roy Davies and Corporal Ray Piper, both of B Squadron, 3 Cavalry Regiment, plus Private Bruce Flockhart of 7RAR. The vehicle was pronounced beyond economic repair (BER) and was later written off. The mine incident happened just south of the coastal village of Phuoc Hai.



Holdfast Magazine

Written and edited by Jim Marett and published quarterly by the Vietnam Tunnel Rats Combat Engineer Association Inc.

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Tunnel Rats search enemy bunkers

On Operation Overlord in 1971, 3RAR found a large enemy bunker system which they assaulted and captured. Their attached Tunnel Rats team then searched the bunkers and set them up for demolition. One of the Tunnel Rats on that two-man Splinter Team was Sapper John Brady, seen above, third from left, facing the camera. The large and well-designed bunker system had been occupied by elements of 3 Battalion, 33 North Vietnamese Army (NVA) Regiment. Photo by CAPT John Tick.

Sapper takes a “smoko”



Sapper Harry Kloplic, a Tunnel Rat with 1 TP 67/68 takes a “smoko” while out bush on patrol with the Infantry. Harry had a high quality camera and took lots of great photos (this is not one of the great ones!) which we’ll see over coming issues of Holdfast. Harry lives in Saigon and joined us on our recent Vietnam tour.

VC Tunnel survivor



This unconscious enemy soldier was found inside a tunnel during Operation Sydney in July 1966. He recovered after being given artificial resuscitation by CPL Norman Sims of 5RAR, and was then taken to Task Force Headquarters for questioning. Coming across live enemy inside tunnels was fortunately a rare thing.

Mine clearing starts early to keep roads open



It’s early morning and Sapper Frank Denley, a Tunnel Rat with 1FD SQN 69/70 prods the earth with his bayonet as his Number 2 in the Mini Team (behind) uses a mine detector. They are checking the road for enemy mines. The road was currently under construction and it was a common enemy practice to place mines on these roadworks during the night, knowing construction teams would return to the site to resume work next morning. It was stressful work for the Tunnel Rats, not only because there was a high chance of finding mines on such sites, but also because of how important it was to find those mines, knowing your fellow soldiers would be working in the area the moment you finished your task. Any mines found would be blown up on the spot rather than removed.

Bunker breaker?



An M3E2, 40 pound, shaped demolition charge, (Composition B), which was meant to be used for destroying Viet Cong bunkers and fortifications, however none of us can recall ever using them for that purpose. The "Shaped Charge" aspect directed all the power of the explosive onto a small area, enabling them to cut through thick steel and concrete. Some were used in Vietnam to destroy old bridges.

3FD TP in action



Bien Hoa Province in 1965 - Bricks, concrete and earth shower skywards as a Viet Cong reinforced bunker is exploded in Xam Cay Xaoi village, Cong Thanh district, by members of 3 Field Troop.

Grim findings on Operation Overlord



On 7 June 1971 Tunnel Rats from 1FD SQN inspect the wreckage of Bell UH-1 Iroquois helicopter of 9 Squadron RAAF. The helicopter was hit by ground fire while undertaking a resupply mission for troops engaged on Operation Overlord. The captain, Flight Lieutenant Everitt Lance, and the gunner, Corporal David Dubber, were killed in the crash, while two other crewmen escaped with relatively minor injuries. The Sappers later used C4 explosives to destroy the wreckage and prevent any part of it from falling into enemy hands.

Cobra gunship lights up Kanga Pad



Harry Klopjic, a Tunnel Rat with 1TP 67/68 took this amazing photo. It is taken at Kangaroo Pad, Nui Dat, with SAS Hill in the background. A US Cobra gunship had made an emergency landing after taking enemy ground fire. The crew were able to escape the aircraft safely, just before it burst into flames. All sorts of ammunition and rockets then caught fire, creating a sensational fireworks display. Harry currently lives in Saigon.

Navy divers foil VC mine attack



Components of a Soviet BPM-2 Limpet mine recovered from the Vung Tau pier by the Australian Navy Clearance Diving Team 3 after a swimmer Viet Cong attack at Da Long Pier on 23 May 1969. Mines attached to ships in port were a constant threat and it was a common practice to drop grenades off the sides of ships to discourage potential mine-layers.

Left behind in the rush to escape



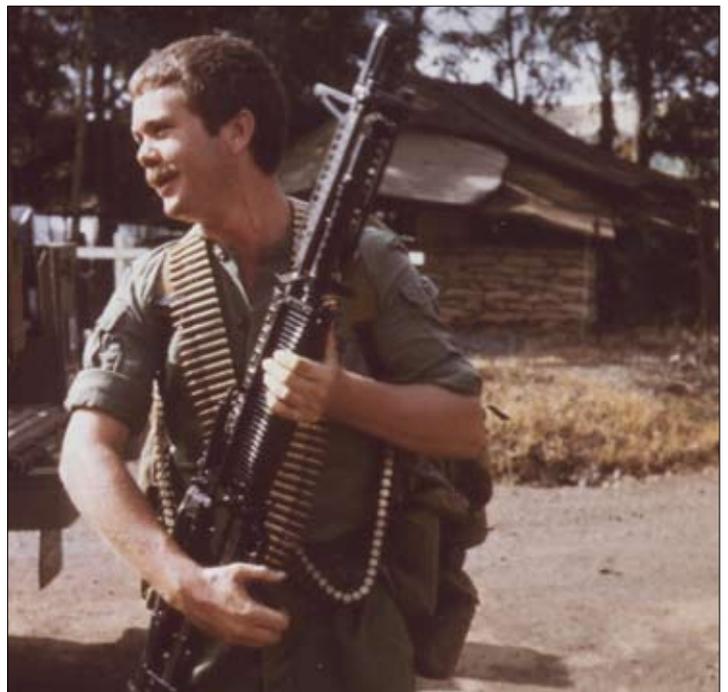
A basket, water bottle, mugs, small kitbag and other personal items are laid out on mats and groundsheet at an enemy camp and bunker system found by soldiers of 3 RAR during Operation Overlord. The system was searched and then blown up by Tunnel Rats from 1FD SQN who were attached to the Battalion for the operation. The bunkers had been occupied by elements of 3 Battalion, 33 NVA Regiment.

Sapper soaks up the attention



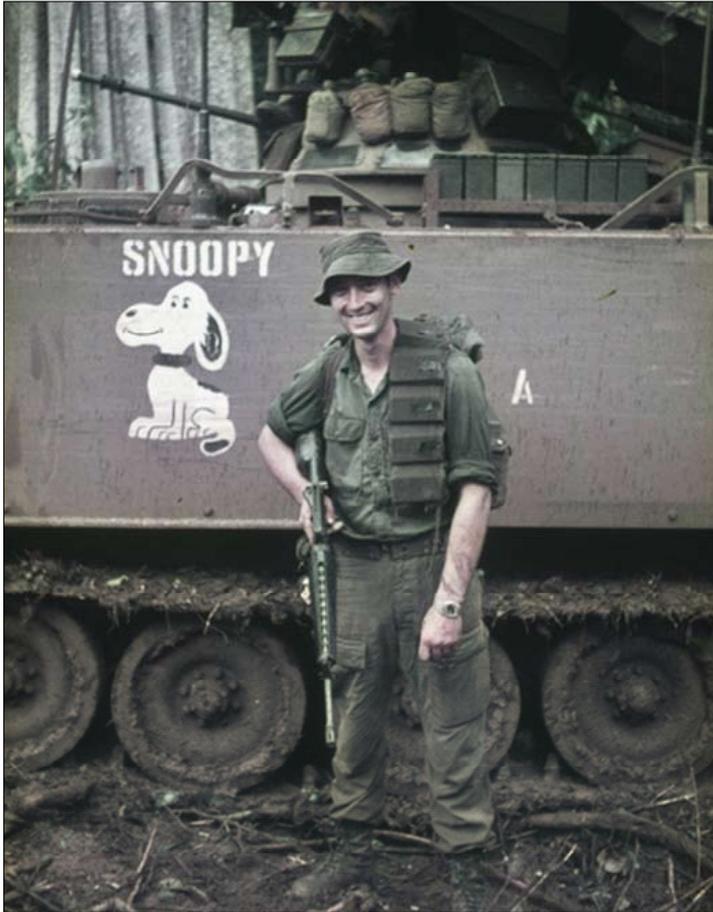
Australian Red Cross worker Pam Spence served at the US 3rd Field Hospital in Vietnam, attending to the needs of Australian troops hospitalised there. Here she is presenting Sapper David James (3FD Troop 1965) with a Red Cross comfort kit containing pyjamas, thongs, shaving and toilet gear and writing material. Dave did a second tour in 1970-71 with 17 Construction Sqn.

Keeping busy between Ops



Some people look awkward holding a serious weapon, and some look like they were born with it in their arms. Here Mick Van Poeteren (2TP 69/70) is looking decidedly comfortable with an M60-7.62mm Machine Gun. Mick and six other Sappers are heading out on a TAOR patrol - a short duration ambush patrol conducted within a 4km circle of the Nui Dat base perimeter. These were conducted during our "time off" between four to six week operations out bush with the Infantry.

Who said Engineer officers never went out bush?



It's the wet season, the ground is sodden, the dense bamboo grove is no shelter from the daily downpour, and CAPT John Tick is out there in the thick of it with his 2 Troop boys. Well done Sapper - but you might roll those sleeves down Sir, or you could end up on a charge).

Engineer makes peace



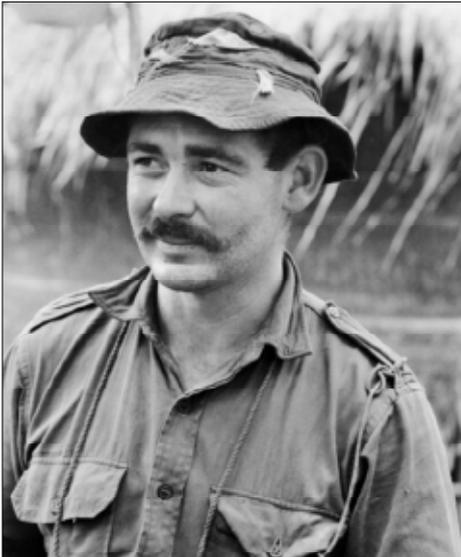
The anti-war peace movement even ebbed into the war zone in Vietnam, particularly later in the war when the media took up the cry as well. This peace sign had been bulldozed into the earth in May 1971, near Camp Eagle, the home of the mighty US 101st Airborne Division.

1 Troop lads battle it out on the netball court



When you were back in base camp off operations the officers seemed to think it was important to keep us busy, and a daily volleyball match was one of their solutions to this quest. Some took the games seriously, while others thought having a smoke during the game was perfectly normal. The photo above was taken sometime in 1968. The very tall Sapper in the shirt is Mike Bruggemann, whose height earned him a permanent position beside the net.

Two tour Sapper



With an almost legal moustache, Corporal Ron Carroll, a Tunnel Rat with 1 Troop is seen above on his 1966 tour to Vietnam. He did a second tour in 1970, with 55 Engineer Workshop and Park Squadron.

Tunnel Rat's rat catcher



Tunnel Rat, Keith Scott of 3 Troop 1970/71 kept this python in his tent at Nui Dat. The snake kept his tent free of rats and Keith could go out on Ops for weeks, knowing there was enough wildlife back at base to keep the python fed and happy.

Early days at 1FD SQN Nui Dat



In October 1966, two open-sided buildings with corrugated iron roofs house the kitchen (left) and the mess (right) for 1 Field Squadron at Nui Dat. Over the following years this would develop into fully enclosed buildings with a recreation room and with a separate boozier next door. First port of call when coming back into base from a four or six week long operation out bush was the kitchen, to beg the cook for a chilled carton of chocolate milk. Heaven!

"I didn't know it snowed in Vietnam!"



Looking amazingly like a snow scene, this is Fire Support Base Brigid which was set up in the white sand dunes on the coast near the fishing village of Long Phuoc Hai. The glare from the sand made Vietnam's heat all the more unbearable, and of course the sand covered everything inside your tent, including your bedding. The base was in a perfect position to give artillery and mortar support to our troops operating in the Long Green, an extensive area at the foot of the Long Hai Mountains. This area was heavily mined by the enemy to protect the approaches to their base camps in the hills, so Tunnel Rats went out with every patrol in those foothills.

Board game for bored comrades



As the US scaled up their military presence in Vietnam during the mid-1960s, anti-American propaganda followed suit throughout communist nations in Asia. While much of this was manifested in well-known propaganda posters, the scorn sometimes took on other forms - like this Chinese board game.

The game is titled "Bury the American imperialists in the boundless ocean of the people's war," and was published in the late sixties. The player who "destroys the American imperialists" first by reaching number 41 is the winner.

The board is headlined by a quotation from Mao: "People of the whole world get united, defeat the American invaders and their bunch of lackeys! The people of the whole world will have courage, they dare to fight, they don't fear difficulties, no sooner has one fallen then another steps into the breach. That way the whole world will definitely belong to the people. All the demons will be perished completely."

The rules of the game are:

1. Two to four people can participate in this game.
2. Before you get on everyone must take a playing piece in their hand. Red first, yellow second, blue third and green fourth, start according to this sequence.
3. When you begin everybody starts from the starting

point, take turns in throwing the dice, for example if you throw a four then advance four steps.

4. The one who reaches the endpoint first, is the one who destroys the American imperialists first.

The text in the boxed numbers reads:

3. You blew up the enemy, proceed to number seven.
5. Tunnel warfare in progress, proceed to number eight.
12. You spotted enemy activities, wait one turn.
14. A wasp war is in progress, proceed to number 16.
17. The enemy tumbled into a punji pit, take one more turn.
20. The enemy released a poisonous gas, return to number 16.
22. A mine warfare is in progress, take one more turn.
23. You relentlessly beat the American imperialists, proceed to number 26.
27. You escorted the prisoners of war, take extra turn.
30. You blew up an enemy ammunition depot, take one more turn.
33. An enemy bombing, return to 29.
34. You relentlessly hit American machines, proceed to number 38.
36. You smashed enemy airplanes, take one more turn.
39. Get the American imperialists out of here, proceed to the endpoint.

说明
一、本棋可供二至四人进行。
二、进行前先把棋子翻转各人随手拿一个。红第一、黄第二、蓝第三、绿第四顺序进行。

三、进行时各人都以起点起步，轮流投骰，制如转至四就前进四步。
四、谁先到达终点，为谁先消灭美帝。

“Baby you can light my fire”



On Operation Massey Harris in August 1970, Tunnel Rats from 3 TP destroyed 34 Hectares of illegal enemy gardens. Drums of aviation fuel and drums of diesel were placed throughout the gardens, and ignited with slabs of C4 on the top and bottom of each drum, to create a wide splash of the burning fuel.

Checking it out



Tunnel Rats, Swampy Smith (left) and Gordon Temby check for mines and booby traps underneath a bridge on Route 23. With narrow roads and few alternative routes, bridges were prime targets for VC and NVA forces operating in Phuoc Tuy Province. Knocking out a bridge was guaranteed to create traffic mayhem.

“Might be a good idea to move back a bit”



An anti-vehicle mine has been found on Route 2 in 1970 and Curly Tuttleby of 3TP 69/70 is beavering away to delouse it. With every man and his dog crowding around the scene, we're not sure about the level of safety being utilised, but there is an officer in the background - so it must all be OK!. As Curly works on the device, Fellow 3 TP Tunnel Rats, Col Milburn, Peter Vandenburg, Yorky Schofield and Gordon Temby (tuning the mine detector) look on, along with several Grunts and Planties.

“Thank God we made it here safely”



Padre Ian Paul of 1 Field Squadron 69/70 (sitting on top of the APC) has arrived in Long Khanh Province for a scheduled morning tea with an ARVN unit working closely with Australian forces. Padre Paul was “one of the lads” and often joined in on our boozy end of Op BBQs. Photo by Gordon Temby.

Latest tour back to Vietnam voted the best one ever



Welcome signs everywhere we looked

Our trip back to Vietnam was an extraordinary experience for all of us, highlighted by having Bob Bowtell's sons, Michael and Peter with us, along with 12 current serving Sappers. We visited old sites of tunnels, mine incidents and battles. We visited our old SQN HQ area and held a remembrance ceremony for our fallen mates. We met with former enemy, sharing a few beers and poignant stories. We had some great meals and spent plenty of time sharing stories between veterans, sons and mates of veterans, and of course with the current serving Sappers. The exceptional comradeship that Sappers enjoy was woven through the entire trip.



Beer fueled madcap bus rides

Our flash French-era hotel in Saigon, the Grand



Enthralling briefings before each day's tour

Amazing music concerts from the NVA Veterans group led by Mr Ha (senior) on the far right



Sumptuous seafood feasts in waterfront restaurants



We were all welcomed at Saigon airport with garlands and grins



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Nine of the 11 current serving Sappers from 1 CER on the tour are welcomed after their flight from Darwin, along with "Roo Dog" Scott 2TP 69/70 (2nd from the right). Ziggy Gniot 2TP 70/71 (3rd from left) was accompanied by his own entourage of six mates from the glitterati of the Gold Coast QLD. Dennis Coghlan 2TP 70/71 (centre in check shirt), with his three sons, David, Matthew and Richard, all flanked by John Breaden (far left) and Curly Tuttleby 3TP 69/70 on the far right. Four Taswegians hit the town at once, Tunnel Rats Peter and Norm Cairns on the far right, and their mates Ben Oldbrich and Kevin Rayner.

Our Welcome Dinner at the 5 Star Caravelle Hotel Saigon



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: John McNulty (Australian Consul General Ho Chi Minh City) welcomes the Tunnel Rats to Vietnam. Our flash function room for the Welcome Dinner at the Caravelle Hotel. SGT David Myers (1CER), Bob Ottery 2TP 69/70 and "Roo Dog" Scott soak up the opening night atmosphere. LT COL Janis Atrons (TP COMD 2TP 69/70) with one of the tour guides from OSC Travel.

Ho Bo Woods

Our visit to the Ho Bo Woods where Bob Bowtell was killed in action was made all the better by having Bob's sons Michael and Peter with us. Finding the right location for our remembrance ceremony had been a challenge. With Bob's sons with us we wanted to be as accurate as we could be on the location to make the ceremony all the more meaningful.

Eventually a 1RAR member who had been there on the day provided us with a grid reference. He described this grid reference as the position they were that day, and said they remained in that position all that day and for one or two days after the incident. Google map and GPS data brought us to exactly the point of the old grid reference. This is not to say this is exactly where the tunnel was, but this was what we had to work with.

On reaching the site our tour manager spoke with residents of a house less than 20 meters from the grid reference location, asking whether they "recall Australian troops being here during the war". They volunteered that this was "the place where the first Australian soldier was killed in the war". This was not exactly correct but you can understand the confusion, and it further reinforcement that we were in the right place.

For a "symbolic" point of reference, we chose the exact grid reference location for where we would lay the wreaths. We held a remembrance ceremony, with an appointed chaplain (COL John Hopman, current Honorary Colonel of SOER) and our own Piper (Ross Brewer). Keith Kermode who served in Vietnam with 3FD TP read the Ode. Wreaths were placed by Michael and Pe-



ter Bowtell, and by 3 FD TP (Keith Kermode), 1FD SQN, 1CER, SOER and the Tunnel Rats Association, all of whom were represented on the tour. The resulting ceremony was one of the most moving any of us have ever experienced.

We thank Michael and Peter Bowtell for the privilege of sharing the experience with them.

TOP: Michael (left) and Peter Bowtell after the ceremony honouring their father. RIGHT: Keith Kermode (3FD TP 65/66) places a wreath in memory of his troop mate Bob Bowtell.





Visit to Binh Ba

When we arrived at the 33 NVA Regiment compound at Binh Ba, the NVA veterans greeted us all with individual handshakes as we passed through the gateway. We presented them with a collection of photos of the Battle of Binh Ba. Our visit was covered by local TV and newspaper media.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:

The NVA veterans line up to commence their remembrance ceremony, which was carried out with crisp military precision.

Sappers Damon Hill, Teagan Murphy and Jacob Webb of 1CER place incense into the ceremonial urn to honour the fallen at the Battle of Binh Ba.

LT Stephanie Sheldon of 1CER and CAPT Erica Hansch of SOER fraternising with our former enemy.

Michael Bowtell, Peter Cairns and Sunil Bhindi place incense into the ceremonial urn.

Our Piper, Ross Brewer was a huge hit of the tour. His skillful playing and superb regalia enhanced each of our ceremonies, and many of our social functions as well. His sense of humour and positive attitude had him fitting in with us all seamlessly. For the NVA veterans at Binh Ba it was the first time they had ever seen a Piper live and they were enthralled at his playing and presense. Well done Piper Brewer.





The Long Phuoc tunnels site

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:

The entire tour (apart from a couple of slackers) on the steps of the memorial temple at the Long Phuoc tunnels site - our tour manager from OSC travel, Mr Ha is seen far right in the front row.

The interpreter listens intently as COL John Hopman (2TP 69/70) thanks the veterans of the Long Phuoc tunnel district for their presentation and for welcoming us so warmly at their memorial site.

Jim Marett presents the head of the Dat Do District Veteran's Association with a collection of photos and maps, including a detailed map of the old Nui Dat base camp. The head of the Veteran's Association said he wished he'd had that map 40 years ago! The photos were all from Operation Enogerra in June 1966 which cleared the village of Long Phuoc and found and destroyed the tunnels from in and around the village.

Members of the tour plus NVA veterans mingle as they listen to the head of the NVA veteran's association give his welcome message the Tunnel Rat's tour group.

The head of the Dat Do District NVA Veteran's Association (left) knew that Peter Bowtell (right) had lost his father to the Vietnam War, yet they both found it in their hearts to greet each other with mutual respect.



The Cu Chi tunnels

RIGHT: Michael and Peter Bowtell bit the bullet and headed into the tunnels, including a special 120 metre long multi-level section which had not had the widths and heights expanded for tourists. They were proud as Punch.



BELOW RIGHT: Bob Ottery (2TP 69/70) shows he has still got the right stuff as he enters one of the original width tunnel entrances.

BELOW LEFT: Our tour group was given a special briefing by the son of a Cu Chi Tunnels veteran. He had many insights to pass on, which he had picked up from his father over the years.



NVA cemetery

RIGHT: The entire tour group assembled in front of the monument at the centre of the cemetery. BELOW RIGHT: SPR Jacob Webb of 1FD SQN places a wreath on behalf of the Squadron. BELOW LEFT: This sacred site is located near baria and honours NVA and VC killed (in essentially the Australian area of operations) during the war.



We gather at the rock again for our mates

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT:

The Tunnel Rats on the tour surround the old ceremonial rock after the remembrance ceremony held on 1st April at the former 1FD SQN HQ site at Nui Dat.

The custodian of the plaque SPR Teagan Murphy of 1CER (right) after handing the plaque to LT Stephanie Sheldon of 1CER (left) for placement onto the rock for the ceremony. The plaque for the rock was on loan to us from 1FD SQN 1CER in Darwin.

Michael and Peter Bowtell after placing a wreath in remembrance of the first Tunnel Rat killed in action in Vietnam, their father Bob Bowtell.

Clive Pearsall, a Tunnel Rat with 1TP in 67/68 places a wreath in remembrance of a troop mate.

Sappers young and old enjoying a beer before our buffet lunch is served at Nui Dat, immediately after the ceremony.

CAPT Erica Hansch of SOER places one of the 36 individually named wreaths at the rock, honouring our fallen comrades from 3FD TP and 1FD SQN.



Our historic rock is under threat

The 1FD SQN rock still sitting in position at the old Squadron HQ site in Vietnam is not a memorial, but it is a memento of great significance and emotional value to the men who served with 1FD SQN in Vietnam. We rediscovered the rock back in 2007 and have gathered there to remember our mates ever since – sharing the experience each time with current serving members of 1FD SQN and 1CER.

Alarmingly we have recently learnt that the REA Vietnam Memorial Inc. committee (they created and maintain the RAE memorial at SME), have plans to remove the rock from Nui Dat and place it at SME, Holsworth. They have been working on this for years without advising the most interested parties (1FD SQN, 1CER, the Vietnam Tunnel Rats Association or the 1FD SQN Group Association) of their intention to move the rock to SME.

The 1 FD SQN Group rock was put in place at Nui Dat in 1970 and blessed by the Chaplain General in April of that year in honour of the 37 men from 1FD SQN Group (including 3FD TP) killed in Vietnam. This rock is of prime interest to the men who served in 1FD SQN in Vietnam, and to the men and women who serve in 1CER/1FD SQN today.

The Vietnam Tunnel Rats Association and the 1FD SQN Group Association are both in total agreement that if the rock is to be moved to anywhere in Australia it is to be moved to 1CER in Darwin. Both our associations are also in total agreement that the RAE Vietnam Memorial Inc should immediately withdraw from any involvement in the purchasing and relocation of the 1FD SQN rock.

The decision on the future of the rock will be made by



The Chaplain General unveils the rock in 1970



We found the rock in 2007 overgrown with weeds



A quick working bee had it cleaned up and ready for our first remembrance ceremony next day

the appropriate bodies; 1CER encompassing 1FD SQN, along with their kindred associations, the 1FD SQN Group Inc and the Vietnam Tunnel Rats Association Inc. These are the organisations with the emotions, and indeed the lives invested in the memento.

Ironically, neither of the two key members of RAE Vietnam Memorial Inc committee behind this spurious and secretive move ever served with 1FD SQN in Vietnam. The prime mover is Phil Hurren who did a five month tour of Vietnam with 17 Construction SQN in 1968. The chairman of the committee is Jack Peel who did a four month tour with 32 Small Ships SQN in 1966, followed by a full year tour with AATTVN in 1970/71.

We struggle to understand why Phil and Jack and their committee are doing this when the rock is so clearly and obviously linked specifically to 1FD SQN Veterans through the 37 men from 1FD SQN killed in Vietnam – all of them our mates and comrades.



Phil and Jack's committee and the memorial they have created at SME (above) encompasses all RAE units which served in Vietnam, and their memorial is recognised by the Corps as the only national RAE Vietnam memorial.

The 1FD SQN rock is not a memorial and is not in any way in competition with the RAE Vietnam Memorial at SME. The rock is simply a focal point where veterans of 1FD SQN Vietnam and members of 1CER can gather to remember their 1FD SQN comrades who lost their lives serving in Vietnam with that unit.

We hope the moves by Phil Hurren, Jack Peel and the committee of the RAE Vietnam Memorial Inc are not the result of some ill conceived idea by them that the 1FD SQN rock is competing with their memorial at SME. We hope their idea isn't to locate the rock at SME simply so they can control and minimise activities around it – and eliminate the (imagined) pesky competition.

Such actions would be an incredibly selfish act against fellow Sappers considering the rock's emotional links to 1FD SQN (Vietnam) veterans and current serving 1CER members.

On the following page we have reproduced

the letter we have sent to Jack Peel, advising him and his committee they have no right to be taking the lead or playing any role in the future of the rock.

TAKE ACTION NOW TO STOP THIS NONSENSE

If you would like to let Jack and Phil and their committee know how you feel about their moves on our rock, please do so at the following email and snail-mail addresses – and please copy the Tunnel Rats Assoc in so we know how you feel too:

Jack Peel – Chairman RAE Vietnam Memorial Inc. at jackpeel@gmail.com

Phil Hurren – Committee member RAE Vietnam Memorial Inc. at pch@xanadu.net.au

Postal address: RAE Vietnam Memorial Inc. PO Box 41 Cambewarra NSW 2540.

(Copy in Vietnam Tunnel Rats Association at tunnelrat@optusnet.com.au Postal address: 43 Heyington Place Toorak Vic 3142)



In April 2015 LT Stephanie Sheldon of 1CER places the plaque back on the rock for our ceremony



Once again our mates are honoured



SPR Murphy secures the plaque for its safe journey back to 1FD SQN, 1CER



Mr. Jack Peel
Chairman
RAE Vietnam Memorial Inc Committee

29th June 2015

Dear Jack,

Ref: 1Fd SQN rock at Nui Dat

Let me preface my letter by stating that myself and I'm sure all of our members have nothing but respect and admiration for the work you and your committee of RAE Vietnam Memorial Inc. have achieved in establishing and maintaining the memorial at SME honouring our fallen comrades from the Vietnam War.

When you recently emailed our association and the 1FD SQN Group Association regarding the RAE Vietnam Memorial Inc's plans to relocate the 1FD SQN rock from Nui Dat, Vietnam to SME, you mentioned you would call a meeting of interested parties in July to discuss the matter. I looked forward to that meeting.

Your more recent letter however, requests the Vietnam Tunnel Rats Association and the 1FD SQN Group plus various others to canvas our memberships for opinions on where the rock should be located. By doing this you have set the agenda through offering various options for the location of the rock and taken the role of deciding what the pros and cons of those options are. We believe these roles and responsibilities being assumed by the RAE Vietnam Memorial Inc. belong elsewhere.

Inevitably through your broadly distributed email, this issue has now spread to the wider RAE Vietnam Veteran community and we can expect the usual firestorm of email responses, bringing new levels of emotion and confusion to the fore.

We are unaware of the gambit in which the RAE Vietnam Memorial Inc. operates, but assume it is in relation to the memorial you have created and maintained at SME. This memorial is recognised by the Corps and by veterans as the one and only national RAE Corps memorial for Vietnam.

The 1 Fd SQN Group rock which sits at Nui Dat was placed there in 1970 and blessed by the Chaplain General in April of that year in honour of the 37 men from 1FD SQN Group (including 3FD TP) killed in Vietnam. The rock is not a Corp wide memorial and indeed is not a memorial at all, but is a rock of great sentimental and emotional significance to the men who served in the 1FD SQN Group in Vietnam.

Through the passing on of our history to current serving Sappers and through visits to the site with them, the men and women of 1CER and 1FD SQN today are equally emotionally and historically linked to the rock.

There are only two parties attempting buy and move the rock. 1: The RAE Vietnam Memorial Inc. via the efforts of Phil Hurren to move the rock to SME. 2: Defensive positions taken by the Vietnam Tunnel Rats Association to ensure that if it comes to Australia it goes to 1CER/1FD SQN. We know that the rock is still sitting in the ground at Nui Dat.

Unless the gambit of the RAE Vietnam Memorial Inc. spreads officially to cover every memento and item of significance of all RAE units which served in Vietnam, then it should politely withdraw from any involvement in the purchasing and relocation of the 1FD SQN rock.

The decision on the future of the rock can then be made by the appropriate bodies; 1CER encompassing 1FD SQN, along with their kindred associations, the 1FD SQN Group Inc and the Vietnam Tunnel Rats Association Inc.

These are the organisations with the emotions, and indeed the lives invested in the memento.

With Best Regards

Jim Marett OAM
President
Vietnam Tunnel Rats Association Inc.

NEW SERIES - SEND IN YOUR STORY NOW

MY FIRST OP



A new series giving Sappers the chance to share the trials and tribulations of their first operation out bush in Vietnam. For all of us, there were funny times, mad moments, and horrible events that would test you in every way possible. It was something none of us were really ready for, and which over the year ahead, would change us forever - hopefully for the better. Simply send your words and pics to us by email or post and we'll edit it into shape. Please caption the photos and provide names of operations and where possible, the dates of incidents you mention. Relax about your writing style and spelling skills, as we will fix all that up. To kick the series off, Jim Marett has been dragged kicking and screaming into providing the first piece - his experiences on 5RAR's Operation Esso in June/July 1969. Jim served as a Tunnel Rat with 2 Troop 1 Field Squadron in Vietnam from June 11th 1969 to June 11th 1970.

By Jim Marett

Despite the specialist training we received at the School of Military Engineering (SME) in mine detection, booby trap de-lousing, tunnel searching and demolitions, I was convinced that when we got to Vietnam the army would have real experts there to look after all that stuff.

It turned out that the "experts" were indeed men just like me, fresh out of SME.

Like many others of the era, my service in Vietnam came via the National Service scheme. The Army had us for just two years, and for those lucky enough to be deployed, it was a bit of a rush to fit it all in.

Within just nine months from enlisting, you were in Vietnam, having somehow completed, rookie training, corps training, plus jungle training at Canungra on the way.

The National Servicemen amongst us had never actually served in an Engineer unit until arriving at 1 Field Squadron in Vietnam – somewhat raw and bewildered.

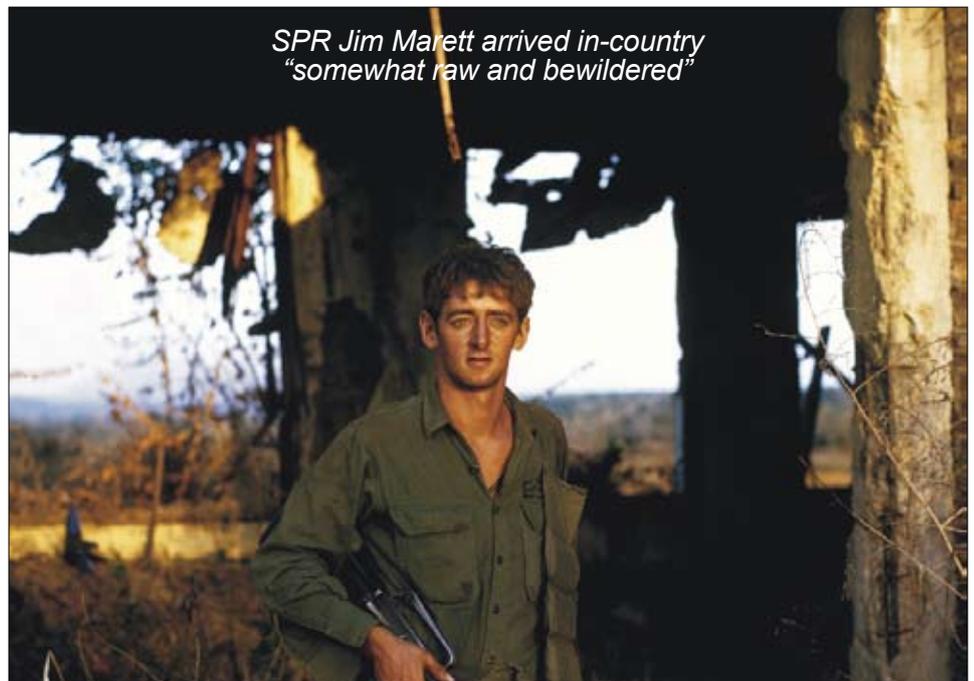
Our saviour was the crucial

two-man team system the Tunnel Rats had established, where men experienced in-country took you under their wing. Known as a "No.1", the team leader passed on locally accumulated knowledge to his "No.2" and shepherded him through the first six months till he was ready to be a No.1 himself. A proud moment – and a pay rise.

My first No.1 was Corporal Geoff Handley, and on my second day in country Geoff warned me out that we'd be going on Operation Esso, and that we'd be

attached as a Mini Team to the tanks. This was to be a month long operation conducted by the 5th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (5RAR) at the base of the Long Hai Mountains.

I was to head out on my first operation on June 15th 1969, just four days after arriving in Vietnam. Over the two days prior to the operation, Geoff helped me get kitted out with packs and webbing, and issued with rations, weapons, ammunition and explosives, showing me how to pack it



SPR Jim Marett arrived in-country "somewhat raw and bewildered"

For the initial part of Operation Esso Geoff and I rode in the basket at the back of the tank's turret. The Long Hai hills are in the background



all properly, and what to discard as junk.

I was stunned at the open access we had to weapons, ammunition and explosives. In Australia these items had all been tightly controlled. In Vietnam it was open slather, and after just a few operations out bush, each Tunnel Rat had a stash of ammunition and C4 plastic explosives accumulated in his tent back at Nui Dat. Amazingly, we were even using C4 explosive for cooking. The rapid burn rate and intense heat of C4 made it ideal for a quick snack or instant coffee (literally).

Early on the morning of the 15th a Land Rover picked Geoff and I up and drove us to where the tanks were situated in the base camp. Here we learnt that there was no armoured support vehicle accompanying the tanks, and at least initially we would actually be riding on one of the tanks instead of the support vehicle.

The main gun and turret of these tanks can move 360 degrees in any direction, leaving no place where you can sit without the danger of being swept off by

My "No.1" CPL Geoff Handley took me under his wing



the traversing gun barrel. The only solution was for us to ride in the basket at the back of the turret, meaning we too were swung continuously back and forth – and of course we were totally exposed. We were off to a good start!

The roads out to our destination were narrow, but of course everything gave way to the tanks. A US convoy of vehicles passed us going in the opposite direction, and all of the "Yanks" were pleased to see the Aussies, waving to us and giving us the "V" sign of two spread fingers – which

I took to be the "V" for victory symbol made famous by Winston Churchill. It wasn't till close to the end of my year in Vietnam after I'd used the gesture regularly, that I learnt its meaning was exactly the opposite – it was the peace sign of the anti-war movement.

On arrival at the area of operations we were briefed that the tanks, along with the Infantry, were to protect a team of Engineers clearing the dense jungle with bulldozers. Each night we would return to a temporary Night Defensive Position (NDP), where bulldozers had pushed earth up into a circular bund for protection. As the land clearing progressed, we would move to new NDP sites.

Most days we would head out to locations suitable for protecting the bulldozers as they worked. This often meant "scrub bashing" through the jungle to get to the designated position.

A 52 tonne tank pushing through dense jungle is not a delicate operation. It's all about brute force, and as the vehicle breaks through, the branches, vines and associated wildlife all come

crashing down onto the body of the tank, which is of course where Geoff and I were perilously perched.

We armed ourselves with spray cans of insect repellent to fend off the red ants and spiders, who were decidedly angry about the home invasion. A snake dropped onto the tank as well once, sending Geoff, me and the snake into blind panic – all three of us wondering which way to head.

No doubt in today's modern army, work practice regulations would not allow such a ludicrous situation to take place, but this was 1969 and you were just expected to suck it up.

On the 19th June, just four days into the operation, I was sitting on top of a tank watching the Long Hai Mountains being bombarded by US naval guns. The enemy had bases and camps throughout the mountains, including lots of tunnels and deep caves they could retreat to for shelter.

The gun fire from the naval ships was being directed by a US forward air control (FAC) plane, a Cessna 02-A carrying a pilot and an observer. Their job was to spot the enemy, then adjust the naval gunfire onto them. By the very nature of their job the FAC crews were always in danger, flying low and slow over enemy positions. In all, 223 forward air controllers were killed during the Vietnam war, a hugely disproportionate number when you think of how they were such a small sector of the massive overall US commitment.

Incredibly, I was about to witness the demise of one of those planes and the two brave men aboard.

It was a strange sight, unreal and difficult for the mind to comprehend. I was just sitting back watching the plane swoop



A Cessna 02-A FAC aircraft skims over the Vietnam landscape



The tailfin of the aircraft was recovered from the crash scene



Captain James Dean Hoag



1st Lt George Richard Dover

and dive, then it sort of stopped for a second in mid-air, then caught fire and began to break up. The muffled sound of a small explosion reached me after a delay of a few seconds. The double tail broke off and the fuselage

section fell straight to the ground, with the wings breaking off on the way and tumbling more slowly to earth. Soon all that was left was a big smoke ring and lots of fine debris floating down.

I was gobsmacked at the

sight, as were the tank crews around me.

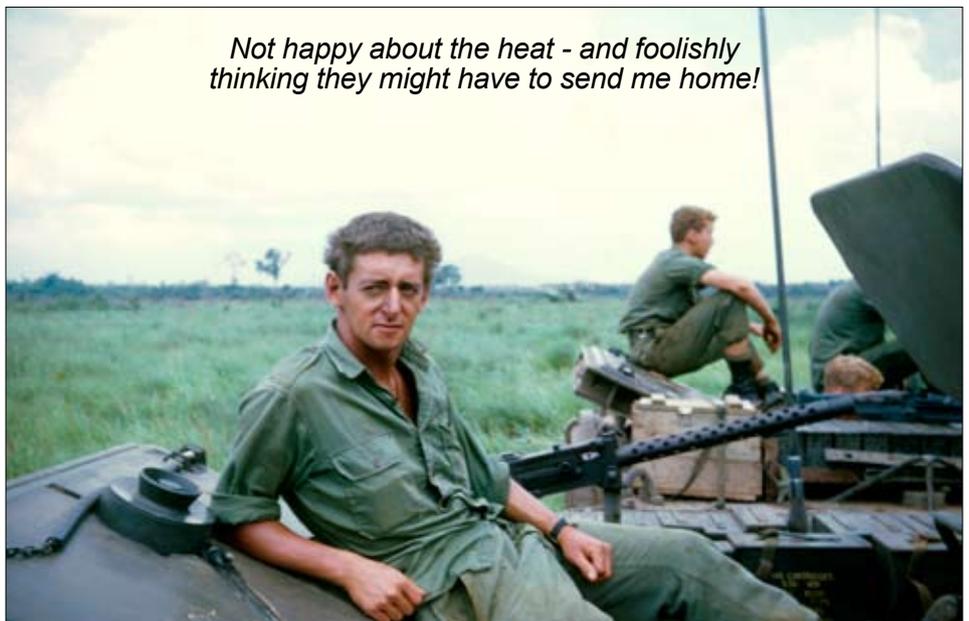
The pilot of an Australian Sioux helicopter from 161 Recce Flight saw the Cessna go down and directed a RAAF Iroquois helicopter to the location. The RAAF guys hovered over the site and reported that both the pilot and observer had been killed on impact. Several of the tanks from our position were sent to secure the crash site, joining up with an infantry platoon in a section of APCs as they arrived. They recovered the bodies and weapons, and were able to conduct a service for the two aircrew because an army padre had gone out with the APCs that day on a familiarisation ride.

The tailfin of the plane carrying its registration number had remained intact so it was loaded onto one of the tanks to prevent it being used for propaganda purposes. The tanks then destroyed anything likely to be of value to the enemy.

A 10:30am entry in the Commander's Diary of 1 Field Regiment Royal Australian Artillery on 19 June 1969 states the aircraft was shot down by an enemy B40 rocket. An earlier entry in the diary that day mentions one of our own aircraft from 161 Recce Flight had reported enemy anti-aircraft fire at the southern tip of the Lang Hai Mountains.

Those who lost their lives on the aircraft were the pilot, Captain James Dean Hoag, of the 19TH TAC AIR SPT SQDN, United States Air Force, and the observer, First Lieutenant George Richard Dover, of Fleet Marine Force Pacific, United States Marine Corps.

The next few days were spent protecting the land clearing team, moving out from the NDP early in the morning, then returning there late in the afternoon. It



Not happy about the heat - and foolishly thinking they might have to send me home!

was hot in Vietnam, damn hot, and in these early days of my tour I wasn't handling the heat well. The times Geoff and I dismounted from the tank and walked in the open, without shade from trees I found unbearable. It was intense and mind numbing. I was beginning to think I'd slipped through the system and I was someone who just can't handle this level of heat. I was actually considering speaking to someone about having to send me home because I couldn't see myself continuing in this insane heat. Luckily I held off on that request as it would have opened me up to some serious ribbing from the lads. Within about ten days the body became acclimatised and from that point on you just never noticed the heat again. Incredible.

Four days after the plane incident, just before midnight on 23 June, Geoff woke me up, telling me that movement had been detected outside our NDP perimeter.

I was really caught out because, feeling relatively safe and comfortable in an NDP rather than actually being out in the scrub, I'd taken my boots off to sleep. It was a mistake I'd never make again over the year ahead.

Under the pressure of be-

ing "stood to" with enemy movement reported outside the wire, it seemed to take an eternity to get my boots on. In delaying Geoff while I struggled with the task, I realised I'd let my mate down.

There was some confusion on where we should head in a "stand to" status. Geoff and I hadn't dug a shell-scape yet because this NDP had just been established late in the afternoon that day. On top of that we hadn't been allocated a position to take up on the perimeter either. Geoff recalled that a tray truck had parked overnight in the NDP, so we scuttled under that.

Within minutes of us finding shelter, one of our machine gun positions opened up, obviously after again sighting the enemy outside our perimeter.

Geoff and I now felt we were shirking our duty sheltering under the truck, so we both exited and ran the few yards to the earthen bund forming our perimeter.

Within seconds of us reaching the bund, the enemy fired an RPG rocket at the machine gun position to our left, using the gun's barrel flash as an aiming point. Fortunately the RPG hit the bund, with the earth absorbing the explosion and

stopping the spread of shrapnel. The two Infantry manning the gun let loose with a barrage of classic Aussie swear words before firing back in immediate response.

We "stood to" for another hour then went on 50% alert for the rest of the night – with all of us alternating one hour on guard and one hour sleeping.

In the morning a clearing patrol was sent out to the area where the movement had been seen, but there were no bodies, blood trails or drag marks.

We usually stayed in these night defensive positions for four or five days before we moved on to a new position, and during those four or five days there was always a lot of tank and APC traffic to and from the NDP.

What we should have realised is that the enemy had been observing all that movement, and that when they were outside our perimeter that night they were laying an anti-vehicle mine.

Later that morning, as APC c/s 22B approached our position it hit a huge mine, flipping it in the air with such force it landed back on the crater caused by the explosion.

It was perhaps 100 meters from the NDP and we could see clearly what had happened. Geoff didn't immediately react in any way so I said to him "Shouldn't we be getting out there?"

Inexperienced, I hadn't even thought or realised what sort of scene would greet us at the APC.

Geoff had been in country about 10 months and had seen and done a lot in that time. "I don't know what your rush is mate," he said – it's not going to be a pretty sight out there."

We had no idea whether there was a crew of two on board or whether it was full of Infantry.

We were taken closer



APC c/s 22B being righted after hitting the mine at GR478548

to the site by an APC then we cleared our way to the flipped vehicle, with me using the mine detector and Geoff prodding with his bayonet.

All of a sudden, there I was, doing stuff I was sure only experts would do.

Because the APC was flipped we couldn't enter the top hatch, and the back door had been buckled and jammed shut by the explosion. We had no way to reach those inside, so we cleared another safe lane, allowing an APC to come close enough to attach a tow rope to flip the damaged APC onto its side.

Once we had access we could see that the Crew commander and the driver were the only ones on board, and they were both dead. The force of the explosion had been massive to lift and flip the 13 tonne vehicle.

The head of one of the crew members had been crushed flat. I'd never seen a dead person before, and the initial shock was that the human body could be so distorted and devastated. It just wasn't right.

Naturally their mates wanted to reach them and extract them from the vehicle, so Geoff

and I cleared a wider area and marked a safe lane.

In doing this, using the mine detector I searched a large puddle of water which had quickly formed where part of the APC had rested on its roof while inverted.

I noticed white bubbles of material floating on the water, which I took to be plastic foam from perhaps insulation material blown from the APC.

Later, back at the NDP, I saw that these bubbles were stuck on my boots and the lower legs of my greens - when I went to brush them off I realised they were brain matter from the crew member whose head had been crushed.

It seemed somehow disrespectful to just wipe them off, so I left them there till they dried and disappeared over the next few days.

I was beginning to learn how incredible the human mind is – and how you can handle such a situation and get on with the job, not only that day, but ongoing.

I was also beginning to realise how fate and luck can play a role in your survival in this place. I saw that the truck Geoff and I had briefly sheltered under was

carrying a huge rubber bladder of fuel for the bulldozers or tanks. If we'd stayed under that truck and it was hit by the RPG we would have been toast.

Killed in the mine incident were the APC Crew Commander L/CPL Keith Dewar, aged 21, and the driver Tpr Robert Young, aged 22, both of 2 Troop B Squadron 3rd Cavalry Regiment.

A few days after this incident, Geoff and I were called out to take a look at an enemy cache of weapons and explosives found by one of the Infantry patrols. We walked to the site with a section of Infantry, marrying up with the patrol which had harboured up around the cache.

The walk gave me a small sample of the patrolling I would do over the months ahead when attached to Infantry units instead of tanks or APCs.

We cleared the area around the cache and the entrance to it, looking for mines or booby traps. Set in a covered hole in the ground rather than a bunker or tunnel, the cache was relatively small according to Geoff, containing a few mortar rounds plus rifle ammunition and some old and weeping blocks of explosive material, possibly dynamite.

Geoff thought this was an ideal opportunity for some on-the-job training, and gave me the task of setting up the cache for demolition.

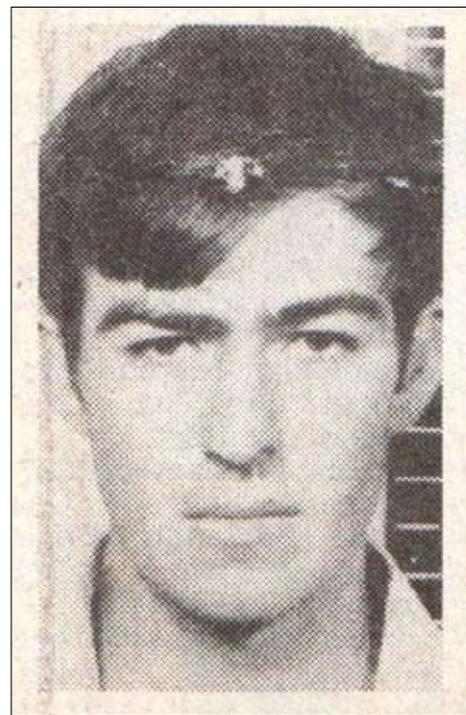
Here I was again, doing stuff I was convinced only real experts would be doing. I was beginning to realise I might be wrong on that assumption.

I gingerly gathered the various items into a pile, with Geoff constantly reminding me they were perfectly safe and needed the impact of an explosion to set them off.

To set up the demolition I used two slabs of C4 plastic ex-



L/CPL Keith Dewar of 2 Troop B Squadron 3rd Cavalry Regiment, killed in action on 24 June 1969



TPR Robert Young of 2 Troop B Squadron 3rd Cavalry Regiment, killed in action on 24 June 1969

plosive, with Geoff showing me how to wrap detonating cord around them as the ignition device for the slabs – totally different to our training in Australia. Under Geoff's instructions I ran the detonating cord out of the hole for about 5 metres, then crimped a detonator to the end of a length of fuse Geoff had measured out, calculated to give us time to walk to a safe distance while it burnt. I taped this detonator and fuse to the detonating cord.

The infantry were told we were ready to blow the charge and they began to move off. As the last men departed I lit the fuse and Geoff and I joined the patrol. After about five minutes we heard the cache blow up. Very satisfying for a young Sapper.

My satisfaction was short-lived though. When we got back to the NDP and started stripping off our gear I realised my "dems bag" was missing. This was the cloth bag all tunnel rats carried, containing lengths of fuse, lengths of detonating cord, plastic wrapping tape, a pair of pliers and eight to

ten slabs of C4 plastic explosive.

In the heat and the confusion of totally new activities, I'd obviously left it behind at the cache, or not secured it properly to my pack and maybe it had fallen off during the walk back to the NDP. I was panicking about telling Geoff. Basically I'd given the enemy six slabs of explosives and all the gear to set it up and use against us.

Being a new guy in country, my mind was still in Australia mode, where if this happened I'd be in very serious strife. I'd certainly be charged with an offence, heavily fined and issued a punishment of some kind.

I knew Geoff would soon find out the lost bag once we were tasked to perform the next job, so I took the plunge and "fessed up", expecting the worst.

"Christ Jim, you're arming the bloody enemy. Get your shit together mate. I'll radio in for replacement kit to come out to us on the resupply chopper tomorrow."

The kit arrived next morn-

ing and I never heard another word about the missing dems bag. I was beginning to love this army.

On the night of 4th July, just ten days after the APC mine incident killing L/CPL Dewar and TPR Young, Geoff and I were in the NDP having a coffee and chatting with an APC crew before hitting the sack. At around 9pm we heard an explosion nearby which Geoff recognised immediately as an M-16 “jumping Jack” mine.

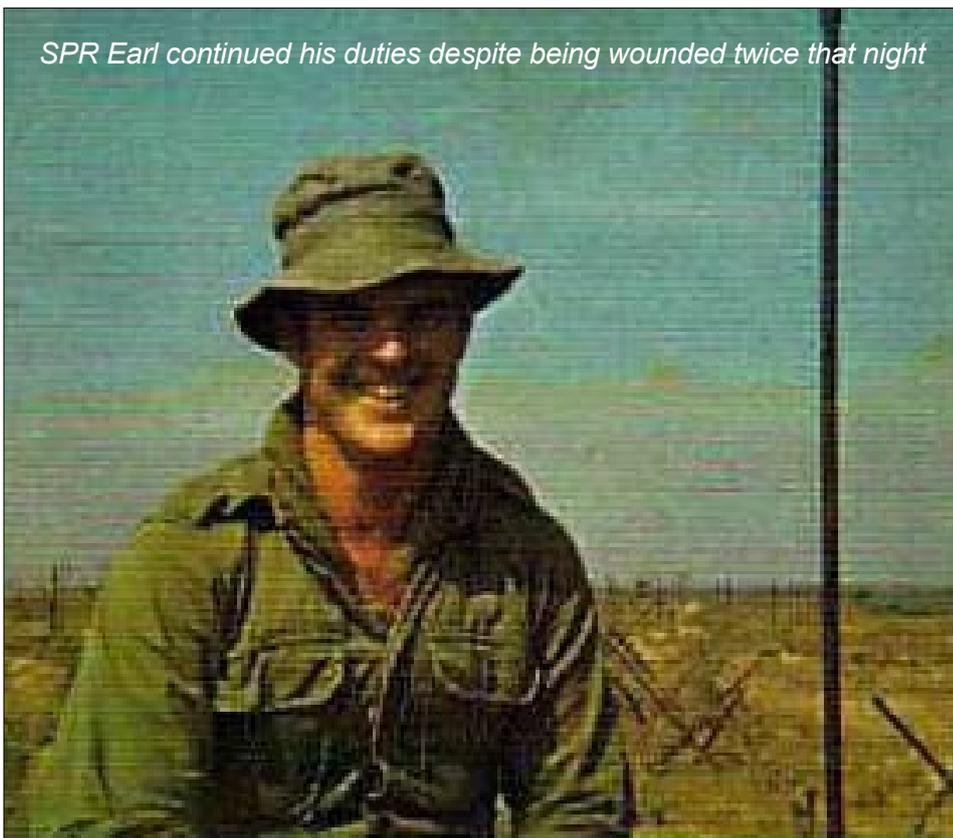
We listened in to the APC’s radio to see who reported in on the explosion. Within minutes 5RAR’s 7 Platoon reported that they’d hit a mine and that about half of the platoon of 24 men were casualties. This level of casualties confirmed it was indeed an M-16 anti-personnel mine. These mines leap out of the ground to explode at hip height, spreading shards of cast iron over a wide circular killing zone.

Geoff knew that our troop mate from 2 Troop, Sapper Robert “Yogi” Earl was the “No. 1” of the Splinter Team attached to 7 platoon, and that his “No. 2” on the team was a Sapper new in country just like me. I wondered how my fellow new guy would be handling what must be a scene from hell out there.

The platoon from 5RAR had been patrolling during the day, and was moving into an ambushing position for the night when one of their men stood on the mine. The platoon’s role that night had been to provide close protection for us in our NDP, about 300 metres away.

We listened as further details came in over the radio and procedures started falling into place for dust-off of the casualties. Geoff alerted me to ensure my gear was ready in case we were called to the scene to clear

SPR Earl continued his duties despite being wounded twice that night



safe lanes to the casualties and find any other mines at the site.

“If Yogi’s hurt mate, we’ll be the closest Splinter Team and they’ll chopper us in – it’s thick scrub between them and us and there’s no way we’d walk through it at night, said Geoff.

“No backpack, just your fighting gear, weapons and dems bag – I can tell you now there won’t be any sleeping or eating going on out there.”

It was frustrating knowing all this was happening just 300 metres away, yet we couldn’t just run out there and help them.

I got my gear together, and as I did so I remembered the sights we’d seen in the mine incident ten days earlier, and knew that this would be far worse.

As I got back to the APC area with my gear, we heard another explosion, from the same direction, and sounding like an exact duplicate of the first one.

“The poor bastards have hit another one,” said Geoff, revealing more snippets of the obscure expertise you acquire in



this job over time.

Within minutes somebody out at the site of the mine incident came up on the radio; “There’s nobody left. There’s nobody left,” he said, in a voice filled with disbelief at the insanity and devastation surrounding him.

When the enemy were planting mines against us it was standard procedure for them to

lay more than one mine, knowing rescuers would be moving amongst the wounded to help them.

Within minutes the radio came to life again, this time a calmer voice, but still rippling with urgency: "Our Holdfast is Whisky, India, Alpha. We need more Holdfast at our Loc. Over."

"Holdfast" was the code name for Engineers, and this message was telling us that one or more of the Splinter Team with 7 Platoon had been "W.I.A." – wounded in action. Without the Tunnel Rats there to find and disarm any further mines, the platoon was exposed to further casualties.

Geoff was soon informed that we were to be taken out to the mine incident site by helicopter, along with some medics plus a number of Infantry to enhance the strength of the dramatically depleted platoon.

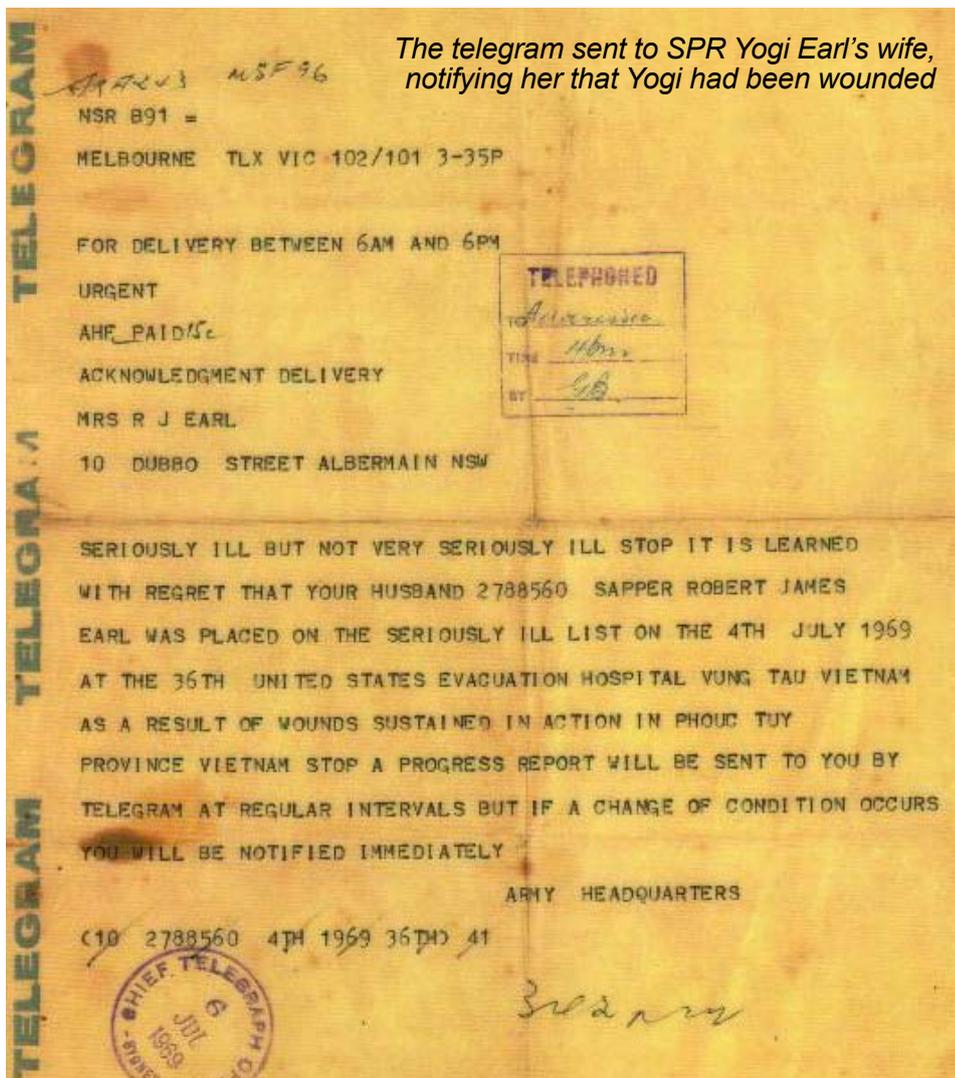
We all gathered at the designated pick-up zone on the edge of the NDP, with the Infantry lads clearly showing how anxious they were to get out there and help their mates.

Among those waiting was another Tunnel Rat, Rod Crane, the No. 1 of a Splinter Team from 2 Troop. I was comforted that there would be more trained eyes on the ground looking for those further mines.

We could hear the chopper approaching through the night sky for some time, but couldn't see it until its landing lights were turned on just before touch down.

With the dust storm created by the rotors still swirling about us, we all clambered on board, somehow finding a place to sit or squat in the sparse space available.

The chopper eased off the ground in what was to be my very first chopper ride – then plopped



straight down again. The message came back from the pilot that the load was too heavy and that two or even three guys had to get off.

"Piss off Jim," said Geoff. "You haven't been here long enough to see this anyway."

Geoff knew he had fellow No 1 Rod Crane with him, and that the two of them would make a strong team on the ground.

I often look back on Geoff's decision to toss me off the aircraft, thinking it's very likely he saved my life in doing so. In my naivety and inexperience I would have been a liability out there that night. In the darkness and in the horrific scene created by the two mine explosions, my chances of stuffing up and stepping outside a cleared area were high.

On arrival at the site,

Geoff and Rod immediately got to work. Sapper Yogi Earl had been wounded by both mine explosions - in the shoulder by the first mine, then severely in the legs by the second explosion. Despite his wounds, this brave young Sapper continued to perform his duty, helping ensure the survival of his 5RAR comrades.

"I tried to keep everyone calm and still so they wouldn't set off another mine," recalls Yogi. "It was hard, with so many of the guys hurt, and many of them just screaming in pain."

"I started clearing safe paths, first to the wounded, and then to a landing zone (LZ) where a chopper could land and take the casualties out. I marked the safe lanes with whatever I had at hand, using a mixture of weapons, packs, straps other gear.

"After I'd finished clearing a safe lane to the LZ, we started moving the wounded close to the pad for when the choppers came in to take them out. Unfortunately, in this process, someone stepped outside the cleared zone and triggered another M-16 mine.

"This second mine wiped out almost the entire remainder of the Platoon. There were only five men left unwounded.

"I was hit severely myself by this second mine, shredding my lower legs and leaving a hot chunk of metal sticking out of my ankle."

"Yogi was just amazing," recalls Geoff Handley. "Bits were hanging everywhere off his legs, and he'd lost a lot of blood – a real lot of blood. He couldn't move, but as soon as he saw us he starts telling us which areas are cleared, which areas are unproven, and how the safe lanes were marked.

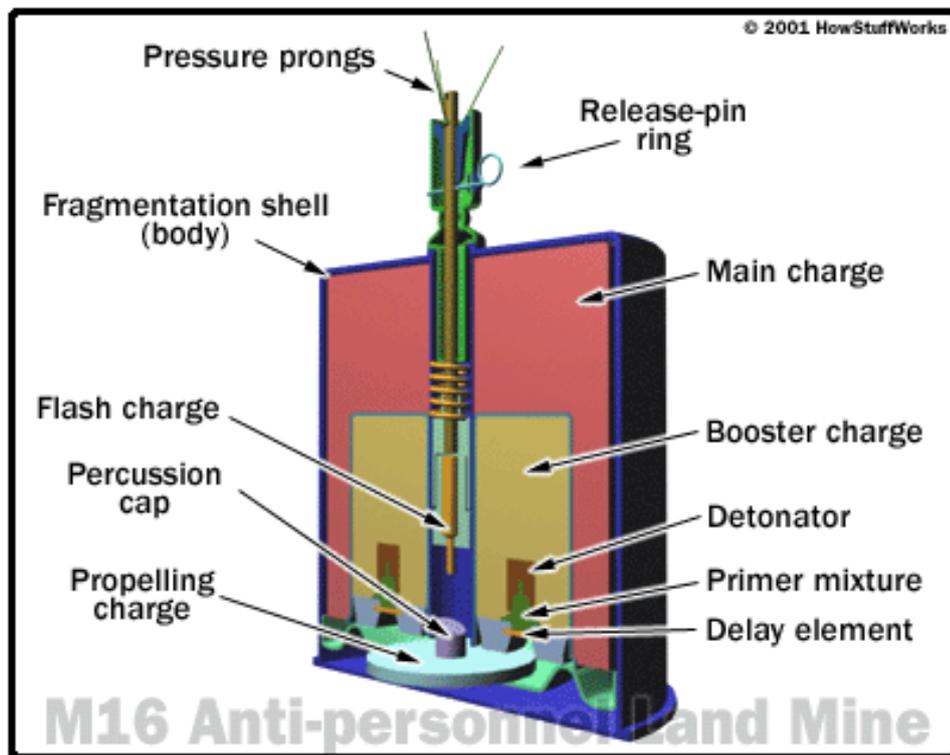
"This enabled us to safely direct the Infantry who'd arrived with us into positions where they could effectively protect the Platoon while we got on with our job."

Geoff and Rod Crane prodded their way in with bayonets, using torches for light.

"Yogi and his No 2 had done an amazing job clearing safe lanes to most areas," said Rod. "But in addition to Yogi being badly wounded, by this time his No 2 was in shock. I think he'd only been in country a few weeks, the poor bastard.

"We prodded our way to the wounded so they could receive medical attention, and then cleared safe lanes to those not wounded and moved them to safe ground.

"Adding to the stress of this situation, we had artillery dropping rounds close to us, protecting us from possible assault



by the enemy we knew were at the foot of the Long Hai Mountains nearby.

"Eventually we had everyone out and proper defensive positions were established. It was about 4am by the time we'd finished."

Geoff Handley remembers that though they'd done all they could by then, nobody could really relax.

"Essentially we'd cleared a minefield in the dark under the incredibly stressful conditions of being surrounded by wounded comrades and having artillery bursting close by.

"We all knew the chances of there still being more mines amongst us were very high.

"And we were right, because in the morning an Engineer Mini Team arrived on some APCs, and incredibly, they found another M-16 mine in our midst.

"It was sheer luck none of us had stood on it during the night."

Yogi was evacuated by chopper that night, to the US 36th Evacuation Hospital, Vung Tau, and subsequently sent home to

Australia because of his wounds. He was Mentioned in Dispatches for his role in the incident.

"I didn't feel I'd done anything special, honestly, I was just doing my job," says Yogi.

Geoff arrived back at the NDP next morning, and didn't really discuss what had taken place out at the mine incident site. It was all just treated as "part of the job" – and I noticed this was the attitude assumed by all of us throughout our tours in Vietnam.

Nobody ever told us to not discuss the details of such events, and none of us consciously made a decision not to talk about them, but the various incidents you were involved in just quickly slipped into the past.

I was beginning to learn of the mind's incredible capacity to deal with the things we were being confronted with.

The remaining nine days of the operation were a continuation of the tank trips out to the observation positions where we could protect the bulldozer teams.

I had been hearing news that several other elements of 5RAR and their attached 2 Troop

tunnel rats on Operation Esso were involved in major mine incidents, including one on the very first day of the operation, where three were killed and 23 wounded. The operation was being described as perhaps the worst of the war so far in terms of casualties to mines.

Everyone was looking forward to getting back to the safety of the base camp at Nui Dat, and of course to hot showers and cold beers.

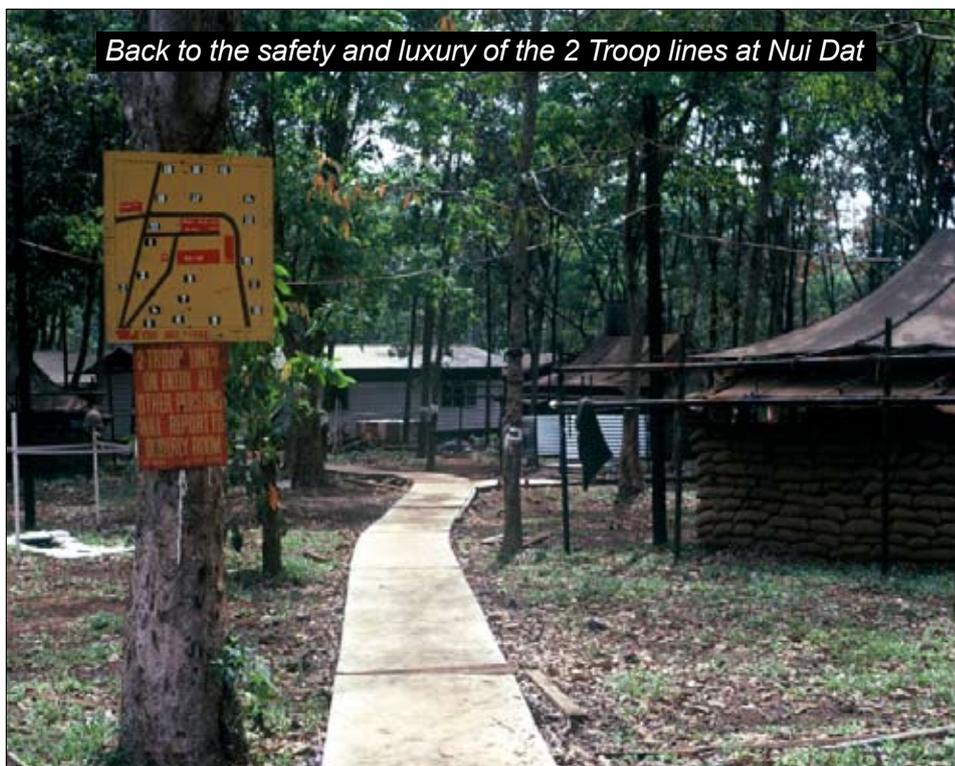
Geoff and I arrived back at Nui Dat on 15th of July, to be greeted with the news that a Troop BBQ was to be held the next night. It was a rare occasion where the entire Troop was to be in camp at the same time – ample reason for a piss-up.

The first thing I noticed at the BBQ was that the guys who'd been in country for six months or more had a special bond with each other. It wasn't anything overt, but there was this underlying trust and confidence between them. And they shared a dark sense of humour, using phrases totally foreign to us new guys. Only time in this place could direct your humour into those dark spaces.

I had by no means led a protected life back in Australia, and had done some serious drinking in my time, but I'd never seen anything like the 2 Troop BBQ that night.

Everyone was freshly showered and dressed in the luxury of clean army issue pants and shirts, but within a short time virtually every shirt had been ripped to shreds, with some guys having little more than a collar left. It was evidently a long-standing ritual.

The steaks and sausages were eaten, but the crabs and the salad were ammunition in a food fight which eventually engulfed the entire troop, leaving us all



splattered with crab guts, lettuce leaves and tomato remnants.

Having lost considerable weight while out on the operation, and having no alcohol for a month, our bodies were less able to cope with the rapid intake of beer. Many were soon a little unsteady on their feet, and many were either singing to their hearts content or laughing till they were brought to tears.

There were no fights and there was no agro. It was all good natured, and obviously a means of coping with the month that was Operation Esso and with some of the horrendous things these men had seen and done.

I'm sure a psychiatrist could explain it all in technical terms, but it was fairly obvious that the grog, the behaviour and the special comradeship enjoyed by the "old hands" were all a means of shutting away the nasty stuff, enabling you to get on with the continuing task in the days ahead.

I didn't realise it then, but when you look back on it now, you have to give high praise to the instructors and the process at

SME. From raw recruits they produced hundreds of men who did extraordinary things in this job – things totally foreign to the civilian lives most of these men had so recently left behind.

The process of going through SME produced Sappers like Yogi Earl - wounded twice in two mine incidents on the same night, yet continuing to perform his duty, helping ensure the survival of his comrades. I would come to learn of many more Sappers just like Yogi, who performed equally bravely in equally trying circumstances.

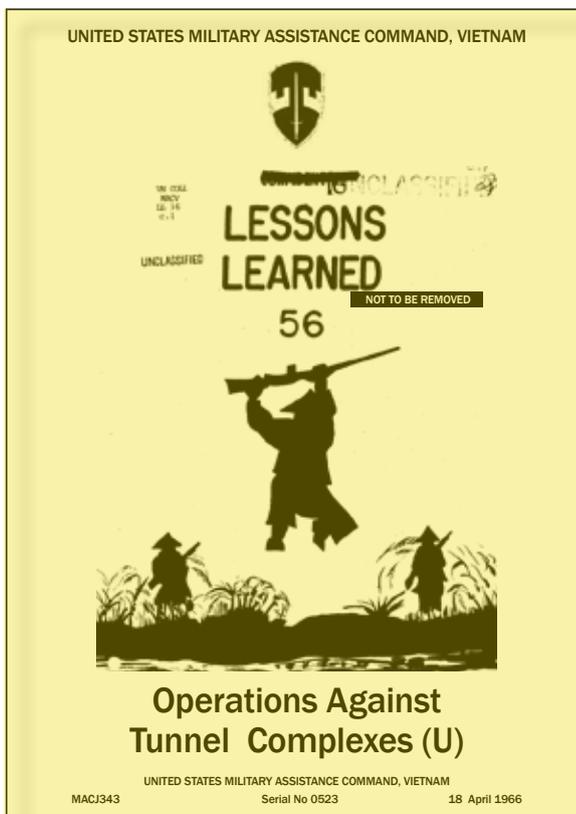
The school produced men like Geoff Handley and his fellow "No.1" team leaders who took bewildered newcomers like me and all the other new arrivals under their wing, passing on the weird and wonderful knowledge and skills of the Tunnel Rats – skills that were essential to our survival in this job.

I was beginning to witness perhaps the ultimate product of the School of Military Engineering, and something I still treasure to this day – Sapper Spirit. It's priceless.

1966 US study on tunnel warfare in Vietnam



Vertical drop entrance of new tunnel under construction at Cu Chi in 1965



The use of tunnels by the VC as hiding places, caches for food and weapons, headquarters complexes and protection against air strikes and artillery fire was discovered by US and Australian forces very early in the war in Vietnam.

Their fortified bunker systems sitting above an extensive tunnel system containing conference,

storage and hiding rooms as well as interconnected fighting points was being frequently encountered.

The tunnel/bunker complexes encountered in the war zones close to Saigon were obviously the result of many years of labour, some in all probability having been initiated as early as World War II and with improvement continuing throughout the campaigns against the French and up until they were discovered in January 1966.

These complexes and many others, formed a formidable and dangerous obstacle to US and allied operations at the time and it was quickly recognised that they had to be dealt with in a systematic, careful and professional manner.

As a result the US Military Assistance Command Vietnam commissioned an urgent report aimed at studying the problem and coming up with ways of combating this extraordinary new threat.

The resulting classified report was completed in April 1966 and titled "Lessons Learned Number 56 – Serial Number 0523 - Operations Against Tunnel Complexes". It was distributed to a restricted list of recipients, including 1 Field Squadron RAE which had just arrived in country.

One of our intrepid Tunnel Rats managed to get his hands on the report and has kept it under wraps until now. It makes fascinating reading, giving insights into the unique experiences of finding these complexes and figuring out how to deal with them on an ongoing basis.

Introduction

This report deals with recent operations against VC tunnel complexes by US and Australian units in the III Corps area. Emphasis is placed on the problems associated with the detection and exploitation of "fighting" tunnel complexes particularly - as found in the war zones and VC base areas.

Tunnel Characteristics:

The first characteristic of a tunnel complex is normally superb camouflage. Entrances and exits are concealed, bunkers are camouflaged and even within the tunnel complex itself, side tunnels are concealed, hidden trapdoors are prevalent and dead-end tunnels are utilised to confuse the attacker.

In many instances the first indication of a tunnel complex will be fire received from a concealed bunker which might otherwise have gone undetected. Spoil from the tunnel system is normal-

ly distributed over a wide area, but may be left in piles close to an entrance or exit under natural growth.

Trapdoors are utilized extensively, both at entrances, exits and inside the tunnel complex itself, concealing side entrances and intermediate sections of a main tunnel. In many cases a trapdoor will lead to a short change-of-direction or change-of-level tunnel, followed by a second trapdoor, a second change-of-direction and a third trapdoor opening again into the main tunnel.

Trapdoors are of several types; they may be concrete covered by dirt, hard packed dirt reinforced by wire, or a "basin" type consisting of a frame filled with dirt. This latter type is difficult to locate in that probing will not reveal the presence of the trapdoor unless the outer frame is struck by the probe. Trapdoors covering entrances/exits are generally a minimum of 100 metres apart.

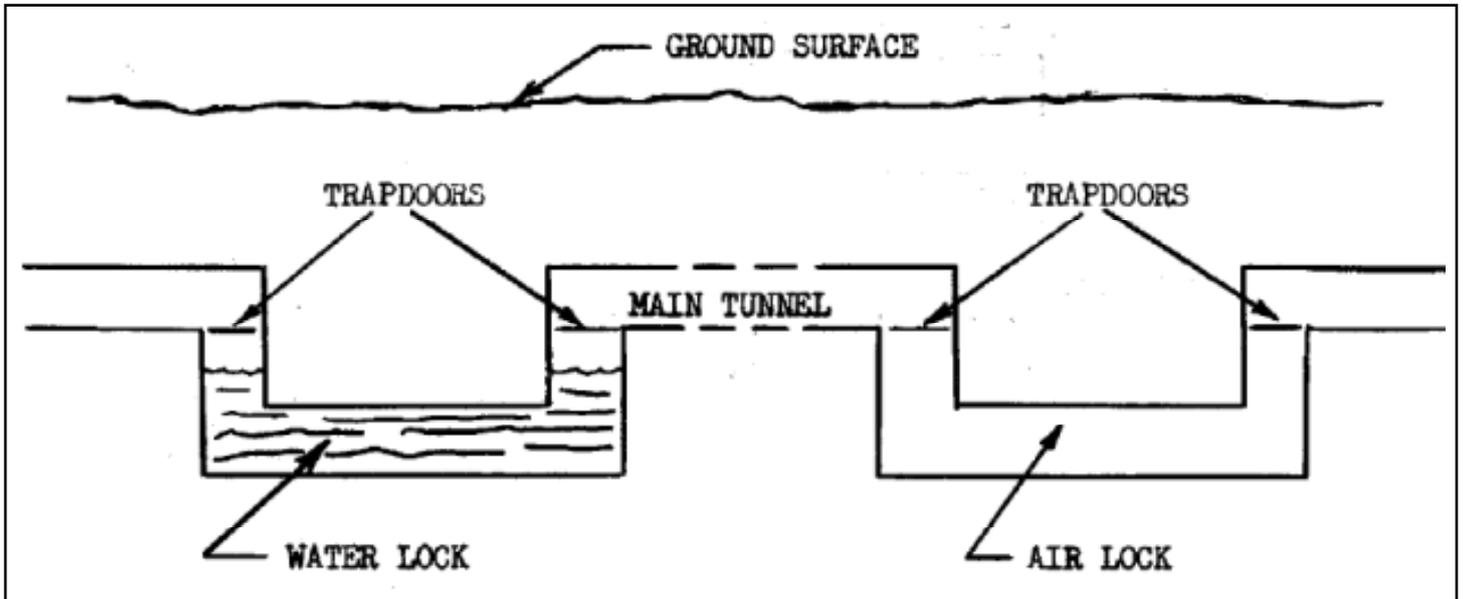
Booby traps are used extensively, both inside and outside entrance/exit trapdoors. Grenades are frequently placed in trees adjacent to the exit with an activation wire to be pulled by a person underneath the trapdoor or by movement of the trapdoor itself

Tunnel complexes discovered in the War Zones have generally proven to be more extensive and better constructed than those found in other areas. In some cases these complexes were multileveled, with storage and hiding rooms generally found on the lower levels. Entrance is through concealed trapdoors and secondary tunnels. In the deeper complexes, foxholes are dug at intervals to provide water drainage. These are sometimes booby trapped and have been known to contain punji stakes for the unwary attacker.

Although no two tunnel systems are exactly alike, a complex searched by 1st



Indoor-outdoor underground arms factory at Ch Chi in 1966



Battalion RAR during Operation Crimp may serve as a good example. The main tunnel length in this case was approximately 700 metres, with the longest straight stretch being approximately 10 metres and the shortest approximately one metre. Fifty foot side tunnels, or offshoots were located about one for every 50 metres. The average tunnel size was two feet wide and 2.5 to 3 feet high. Other tunnels have been discovered however, large enough to accommodate a man in an almost upright position.

Air shafts are spaced at intervals throughout the system and are generally conical in shape, approximately 12 inches at the base and 2 inches at the top. Experience from the US 25th Infantry Division indicates that in some cases the shafts are dug from inside the tunnel by rodents held against the tunnel roof in cages, forcing the animals to burrow to the surface, creating an extremely difficult to detect, but functional air shaft.

Rooms approximately four feet by six feet by three feet in height, were found about every 100 metres. Shelves were provided along one side wall together with various types of seats. These rooms were also found at the ends of secondary (offshoot)

tunnels. At 30 to 40 metre intervals in the main tunnel wall, small offshoots were noted with bamboo backwalls. Further investigation revealed excavation shafts leading to the surface from behind the bamboo walls; the shafts, however, being filled in with dirt after the adjacent tunnel section had been completed (see diagram below).

Another tunnel characteristic of note is the use of air or water locks which act as "firewalls" preventing blast, fragments or gas from passing from one section of the tunnel complex to another. Use of these "firewalls" is illustrated in the sketch above:

Recognition of their cellular nature is important for understanding tunnel complexes. Prisoner interrogation has indicated that many tunnel complexes are interconnected, but the connecting tunnels, concealed by trapdoors or blocked by three to four feet of dirt, are known only to se-

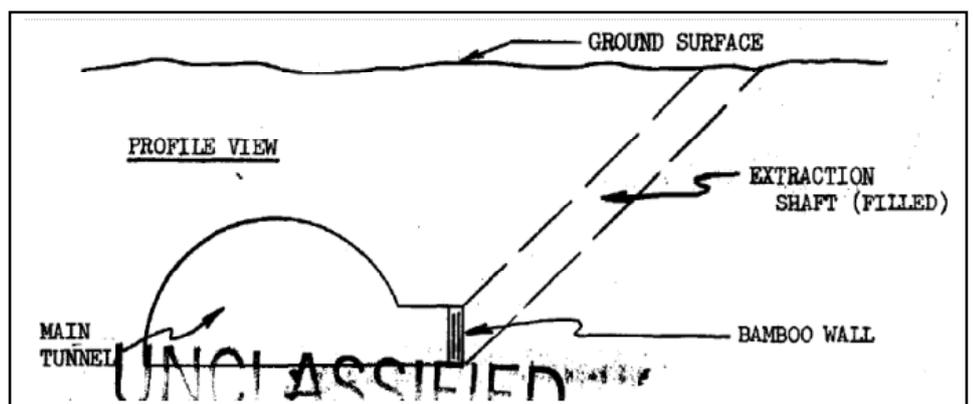
lected persons and are used only in emergencies. Indications also point to interconnections of some length (eg: 5 to 7km) through which relatively large bodies of men may be transferred from one area to another, especially from one "fighting" complex to another. The "fighting" complexes terminate in well-constructed bunkers, in many cases covering likely landing zones in a war zone or base area.

Operations against Tunnel Complexes

The following experience of the 1st. Infantry Div. in the Di An and the Cu Chi areas is representative of tunnel operations to date:

In tunnel exploitation and destruction operations the tactical situation permitted the employment of the following techniques:

(1) The area in the immediate vicinity of the tunnels was secured and defended by a 360 degree perimeter to protect the



tunnel team.

(2) The entrance to the tunnel was carefully examined for mines and booby traps.

(3) Two members of the team entered the tunnel with wire communications to the surface.

(4) The team worked its way through the tunnel, probing with bayonets for booby traps and mines and looking for hidden entrances, food and arms caches, water locks, and air vents. As the team moved through the tunnel, compass headings and distances traversed were called to the surface. A team member at the surface mapped the tunnel as exploration progressed.

(5) Captured arms and food items were turned over to the unit employing the team.

(6) As other entrances were discovered and plotted, they were marked in such a way as to indicate if the Viet Cong used them after discovery, but before destruction could be accomplished. In many cases tunnels were too extensive to be exploited and destroyed in the same day and the Viet Cong mined entrances and approaches during the night after the tunnel team temporarily departed.

(7) Upon completion of exploitation, forty-pound cratering charges were placed fifteen to twenty metres from all known tunnel entrances, and where extensive tunnel complexes existed, ten pound bags of CS-1 Riot Control Agent were placed at intervals down the tunnel at sharp turns and intersections and tied into the main charge. Where sufficient detonating cord was not on hand to tie-in all bags of CS-1 to the main charge, bags of CS-1 were dispersed in the tunnel by detonation with a defused M-26 fragmentation grenade fused with a nonelectric cap and a length of time fuse. Sharp turns in the



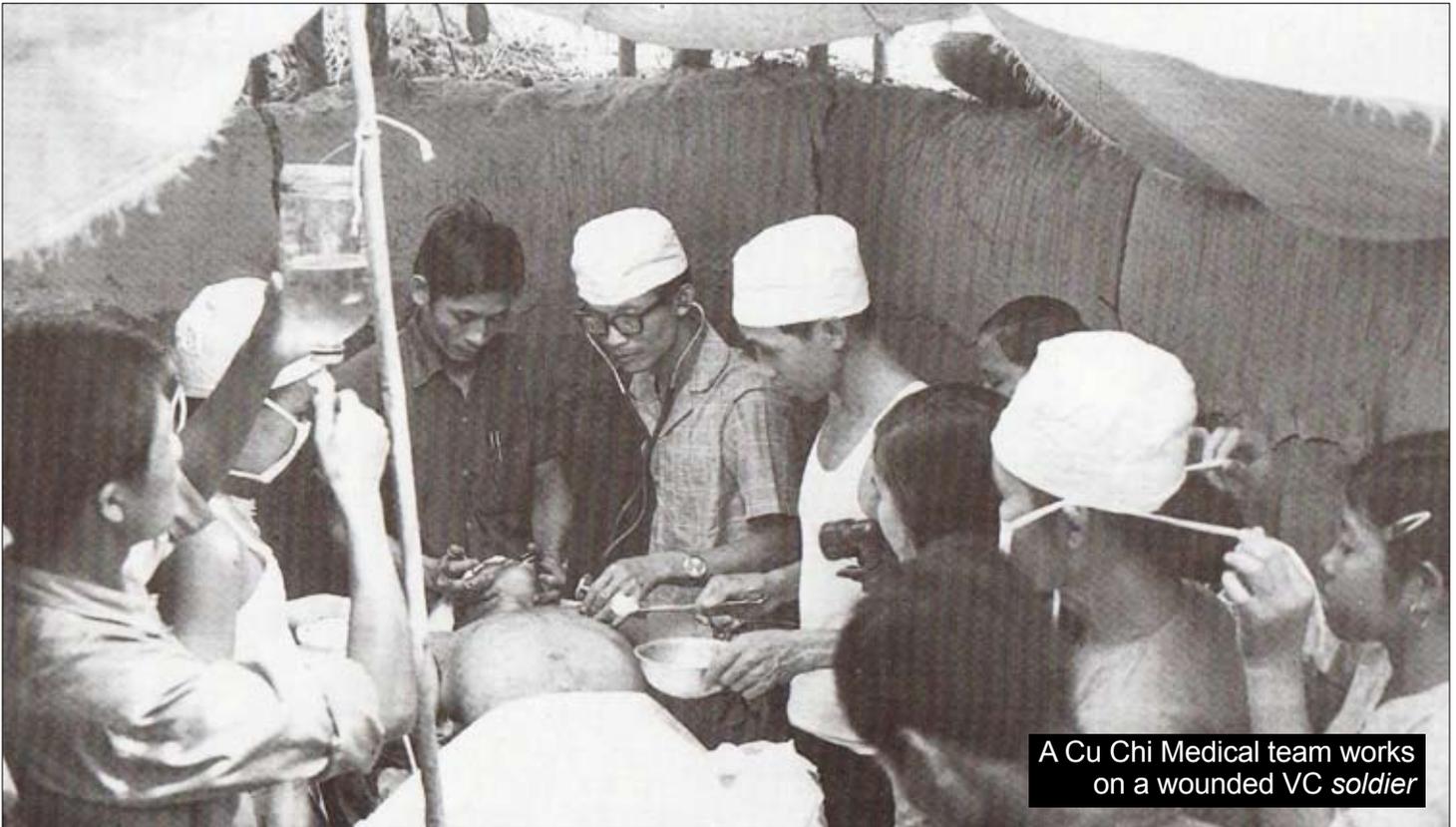
tunnel protected the demolitions man from the grenade blast, if the detonation occurred before he exited the tunnel. It must be emphasized, however, that the denial achieved by the use of CS-1 is only temporary in duration.

In tunnel flushing and denial operations, when the tactical situation is fast-moving and enemy contact is heavy, two hasty methods may be utilized for flushing Viet Cong from tunnels and temporarily denying these tunnels as Viet Cong hiding places.

(1) Immediate Interdiction and Harrassment: The infantryman discovering a spider hole

A US Tunnel Rat team explores one of the many tunnel entrances at Cu Chi in 1966. A revolver was initially the preferred weapon

or tunnel entrance during intensive combat lobs an M-25 CS "baseball type" grenade in the hole, followed by a fragmentation grenade. The bursting of the CS grenade places an instantaneous cloud of CS in the tunnel and the fragmentation grenade blows the CS through a section of the tunnel while killing any Viet Cong near the entrance. The low level contamination resulting from the above method would serve only



A Cu Chi Medical team works on a wounded VC soldier

to discourage rather than prevent future Viet Cong use of that tunnel entrance.

(2) Hasty Tunnel Flushing and Denial: In some areas the combat situation will permit a hasty search for hidden tunnel entrances but either lack of time or Viet Cong occupation of the tunnel will not permit exploitation by the tunnel team in the manner described earlier. In this case the Mity Mite Portable Blower can be employed to flush the Viet Cong from the tunnels using burning type CS Riot Control Agent grenades (M7A2). In addition, the smoke from the grenades will, in most cases, assist in locating hidden entrances and air vents. After flushing with CS grenades, powdered CS-I can be blown into tunnel entrances with the Mity Mite to deny the tunnel to the Viet Cong for limited periods of time. It must be borne in mind, however, that this method will only be effective up to the first "firewall".

Dangers

Dangers inherent in the above operations fall generally into the following categories and should

be taken into account by all personnel connected with these operations:

- a. Mines and booby traps in the entrance/exit area.
- b. Punji pits inside an entrance.
- c. Presence of small but dangerous concentrations of carbon monoxide produced by burning-type smoke grenades after tunnels are smoked. Protective masks will prevent inhalation of smoke particles which are dangerous only in very high concentration, but will not protect against carbon monoxide.
- d. Possible shortage of oxygen as in any confined or poorly ventilated space.
- e. VC still in the tunnel - these VC pose a danger to friendly personnel both above and below ground (in some instances, dogs have successfully detected VC hiding in tunnels).

Lessons Learned:

Tunnel techniques.

(1) A trained tunnel exploitation and denial team is essential to the expeditious and thorough exploitation and denial of

Viet Gong tunnels. Untrained personnel may miss hidden tunnel entrances and caches, take unnecessary casualties from concealed mines and booby traps, and may not adequately deny the tunnel to future Viet Cong use.

(2) Tunnel teams should be trained, equipped and maintained in a ready status to provide immediate expert assistance when tunnels are discovered.

(3) Careful mapping of a tunnel complex may reveal other hidden entrances as well as the location of adjacent tunnel complexes and underground defensive systems.

(4) Small calibre pistols or pistols with silencers are the weapons of choice in tunnels, since large calibre weapons without silencers may collapse sections of the tunnel when fired and/or damage eardrums.

(5) Personnel exploring large tunnel complexes should carry a coloured smoke grenade to mark the location of additional entrances as they are found. In the dense jungle it is often difficult to locate the position of these



Australian communist journalist, Wilfred Burchett on a traitorous visit to the Cu Chi Tunnels during the war. His visit caused the Australian government of the day to refuse renewal of his passport, resulting in Burchett having to live in communist Bulgaria where he died of cancer in 1982

entrances without smoke

(6) Two man teams should enter tunnels for mutual support. The second man can assist the first in emergencies.

(7) Tunnel team members should be volunteers. Claustrophobia and panic could well cause the failure of the team's mission or the death of its members.

(8) Constant communication between the tunnel and the surface is essential to facilitate tunnel mapping and exploitation.

(9) Tunnels are frequently outstanding sources of intelligence and should therefore be exploited to the maximum extent practicable.

(10) Since tunnel complexes are carefully concealed and, camouflaged, search and destroy operations must provide adequate time for a thorough search of the area to locate all tunnels. Complete exploitation and destruction of tunnel complexes is very time consuming and operational plans must be made accordingly to ensure success.

(11) The presence of a tunnel complex within or near an area of operations poses a continuing threat to all personnel in the area. No area containing tunnel complexes should ever be considered completely cleared.

(12) Current chemical denial methods are only temporarily

effective against tunnel complexes. Test results to date indicate that CS-1 effects last about seven days. Extensive research and development efforts have been requested in the entire field of tunnel location and denial to provide increased effectiveness in operations against tunnel complexes.

A representative equipment list for a tunnel team:

- (1) Protective Masks - one per individual.
- (2) TA-I telephone - two each.
- (3) One half mile field wire on doughnut roll.
- (4) Compass - two each.
- (5) Sealed beam 12 volt flashlights - two each.
- (6) Small calibre pistols - two each.
- (7) Probing rods - twelve inches and thirty-six inches.
- (8) Bayonets - two each.
- (9) Mity Mite Portable Blower - one each.
- (10) M7A2 CS grenades - twelve each.
- (11) Powdered CS-1 as required.
- (12) Coloured smoke grenades - four each.
- (13) Insect repellent and spray - four cans.
- (14) Entrenching tools - two each.
- (15) Cargo packs on pack board - three each.

SAPPER SNIPPETS

ANZAC Day weekend visit to Darwin

LT COL George Hulse (1TP 68/69) organised a visit to Darwin and 1CER for the 1 Field Squadron Group Association. The visit coincided with the ANZAC Day weekend, and the Tunnel Rats Association tagged along as well.

It was a great weekend, featuring a superbly organised visit to 1CER. The unit made us all welcome, and feted us with static displays, lunch at the booz-er, and of course that great Sapper comradeship.

We all marched to the Palmerston memorial on the day, with 1CER led by LT COL Michael Scott immediately behind us. A very proud moment for us old Sappers.



TOP: The 1 Field Squadron Group head off on the march, led by LT COL George Hulse and Jethro Thompson. The 1 Field Squadron Group's new banner displays the many conflicts 1FD SQN and the forbears of 1FD SQN have been involved in since the Boer War.

MIDDLE: Commanding Officer 1CER, LT COL Michael Scott (Left), stands ready to lead his Regiment of Sappers off on the ANZAC Day March at Palmerston NT.

BOTTOM: The scene after the conclusion of the dawn service at the Palmerston memorial.



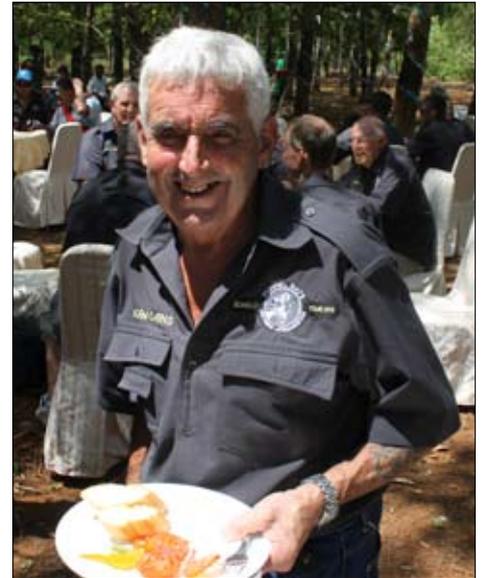
Sapper at the Top



During the Darwin visit, Jim Marett chats with Brigadier Mick Ryan, 1st Brigade Commander in Darwin. Brigadier Ryan is a Sapper though and through, and this new role is a huge job - think Task Force Commander in Vietnam, men like Brigadier R.L. Hughes (1967–68); Brigadier C.M.I. Pearson (1968–69); and Brigadier S.P. Weir (1969–70). This is not the first time Brigadier Ryan has served at Robertson Barracks, he served there in 2006 to 2007 as the Commanding Officer of 1st Combat Engineer Regiment. The 1st Brigade under Brigadier Mick Ryan currently consists of the following units:

- Headquarters 1st Brigade
- 1st Armoured Regiment
- 2nd Cavalry Regiment
- 5th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment
- 7th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment
- 8th/12th Regiment, Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery
- 1st Combat Engineer Regiment
- 1st Combat Signal Regiment
- 1st Combat Service Support Battalion

1st Brigade soldiers are at the forefront of Australia's operational commitments around the world. In recent years, 1st Brigade units have deployed to Timor-Leste (East Timor), Iraq and Afghanistan.



“We don’t get tucker like this in Tassie”

As far as Norm Cairns (3 TP 67/68) is concerned, our BBQ Lunch at Nui Dat on April 1st this year had nothing to do with this being the anniversary date of 1 Field Squadron's arrival in Vietnam in 1966. As far as Norm was concerned, the barbie was a birthday party thrown just for him. Norm was born on April 1st in Tasmania - a sort of double whammy. A birthday cake was organised for Norm on the day, and our gathering of 63 sang Happy Birthday and raised our glasses as we sat in the shade of the rubber trees .

Brave dogs honoured



Dave Sturmer, a Tunnel Rat with 1TP 69/70 is a keen and skilled artists, and he has recently completed this portrait of the six war dogs KIA in Afghanistan. George Hulse plans to auction the painting to raise funds for medals for the dogs. More details soon.

Tunnel Rats List

All list enquires to Graeme Gartside (contact details below)

This is our latest list of former Tunnel Rats. If you are not on the list and wish to be, please send your details (Troop, year, phone number and address) to Graeme Gartside at email: ggart@internode.on.net or call 08 8725 6900 or by mail to Graeme Gartside, 9 Park Street Mt Gambier SA 5290

3 Field Troop (1965-66)

Ian Biddolph 02 4472 9434
 Alan Christie 07 5494 6628
 Brian Cleary 0438239387
 Allan S Coleman 07 4687 7975
 Bill Corby 07 5502 1193
 John "Tex" Cotter 07 4723 1244
 "Meggsie" Dennis 0413 193 584
 Des Evans 07 4128 2390
 Ray Forster 07 3409 1907
 Geoff Green 03 6272 8167
 Barry Harford 08 8088 4371
 Sandy MacGregor 02 9457 7133
 Frank Mallard 0408183325
 Keith Mills 07 4770 7267
 Warren Murray 02 6059 8142
 John Opie 0427280703
 Bernie Pollard 08 9248 3178
 Ross Thorburn 0408413204
 Bill Unmeopa 08 9300 5561
 Snow Wilson Jnr 02 6649 3998

OC's 1 Field Squadron

John Kemp 02 6288 3428
 Rex Rowe 0419 251 420

1 Troop (1966-67)

Nick Burgerhof 07 3271 1592
 Ray Burton 08 8268 4575
 Ron Carroll 0408884327
 Joe Cazez 07 3710 8102
 Allan S Coleman 07 4661 1924
 Grahame Cook 02 4390 5159
 Alan Hammond 0423491091
 Cul Hart 0413300120
 Neil Innes MM 02 9875 2962
 Ken Jolley 02 6624 4066
 Barry Kelly 07 4661 2898
 Axel Kraft 08 9572 9597
 Peter McTiernan 02 6557 5211
 David Martin 02 6379 6097
 Gavin Menzies 02 6584 7257
 John Olsen 0414433341
 Ron Rockliffe 02 9789 4302
 Trevor Shelley 0419784954
 "Jethro" Thompson 0732168906
 Ross Tulloh 0418223345
 Graham Zalewska-Moon
 (Poland phone: 48-815177391)

1 Troop (1967-68)

Billy Adams 03 5974 2916
 Henry Baggaley 07 5433 0482
 Reg Bament 02 6948 2524
 Bruce Bevan 0402334614
 Neville Bartels 07 4055 9871
 Col Campbell 0417658770
 Dave Campbell 07 4225 6310
 Bob Coleman 03 5332 0975
 Ross Comben 08 9535 2273
 Jack Green 07 3278 8719
 Norm Hitchcock (Canada)
 1-250-2455137
 Ray Kenny 07 3881 3648

Peter Koch 04 3822 3100
 Brian Lewis 07 3880 0376
 "Paddy" Maddigan 07 5485 1918
 Mike McCallum 02 6288 5113
 John Neal 02 9982 6694
 Barry O'Rourke 03 5987 2828
 Clive Pearsall 03 9459 4470
 Terry Perkins 0413343168
 Alan Rantall 03 9434 2031
 Ivan Scully 03 9802 0977
 Peter Sheehan 03 9390 2834
 Carlton "CP" Smith 0448000334
 Max Staggard 0418522859
 Jim Trower 0418842744

1 Troop (1968-69)

Ray Bellinger 0407952670
 Adrian Black 0417756729
 Mike Bruggemann 0409441992
 Peter Carrodus 02 9759 6383
 Albert Eyssens 03 9769 9715
 Ken Ford 02 6645 2738
 Max Goiser 02 9792 1765
 Peter Hollis 02 6581 5401
 George Hulse 07 3399 7659
 Robert Laird 03 6356 1748
 Brian Lamb 02 6059 6947
 Kent Luttrell 0408387641
 Kerry McCormick 03 6344 5291
 Keith Murley 0429729764
 Alan Paynter 03 5975 7130
 Richard Reilly 02 6262 7374
 Colin Spies 07 4743 4676
 Garry Von Stanke 08 8725 5648
 Cliff Truelove 02 6495 7844
 Ken Wheatley 07 4774 0045
 Bob Wooley 03 6264 1485
 David Wright 03 9435 4131

1 Troop (1969-70)

Kevin Atkinson 08 9041 1571
 Larry Batze 07 4033 2025
 Allan S Coleman 07 4687 7975
 Paul Cook 02 4946 5321
 Phil Cooper 0439 955 207
 Garry Degering 03 9796 0136
 John Felton 07 4661 8679
 Grahame Fletcher 0408822489
 Brian Forbes 0412047937
 Jon Fuller 02 4774 1674
 P. "Guts" Geisel 07 4092 1735
 Terry Gleeson 03 5623 2886
 Trevor Kelly 08 9538 1184
 Des McKenzie 07 5448 3400
 Anthony Marriott 03 6257 0279
 Doug Myers 0421904562
 Paul Ryan 0429165974
 Les Slater 08 9361 0603
 Max Slater 0412 772 849
 Vic Smith 0432916485
 Dave Sturmer 02 8407 9812

1 Troop (1970-71)

Mick Augustus 07 3205 7401

Dan Brindley 02 6643 1693
 Ian Cambell 03 9870 0313
 Ray "Brute" Carroll 08 9342 3596
 Phil Duffy 0406020382
 Harry Ednie 03 5866 2644
 Bruce Fraser 07 5499 0508
 Garth Griffiths 0435902386
 "Paddy" Healy 02 4930 7541
 Peter Krause 02 6723 2835
 John Lewis 07 3425 1524
 R Loxton 0419944755
 Barry Meldrum 03 5427 1162
 Roger Newman 07 5450 6054
 Peter North 08 9279 5905
 Dennis Pegg 03 6224 9090
 Bob Pfeiffer 07 5464 5221
 John Pritchard 02 9837 7482
 John Severyn 0407008610
 Garry Shoemark 02 6546 6778
 Garry Sutcliffe 07 4684 3229
 Donald Stringer 07 4151 2659
 Paul Taylor (NZ) (64)42990915
 Terry Ward 02 6566 6163
 Jim Weston 02 4987 7179
 John Wright 03 6398 6211

2 Troop (1966-1967)

Richard Beck 07 3208 5808
 David Buring 02 6254 6689
 Ron Cain 02 6586 1412
 Graeme Carey 02 6056 0997
 Terry Gribbin 03 9722 9717
 Alan Hammond 0423491091
 Peter Hegarty 07 4169 0372
 Graeme Leach 07 4777 8627
 Ken McCann 0409938830
 Rod McClennan 07 3267 6907
 Noel McDuffie 0427051678
 Bob McKinnon 07 3267 0310
 Peter Matthews 03 6250 3686
 Warren Morrow 0418427947
 Mick Shannon 08 8552 1746
 Stan Shepherd 0412 232 197
 Bob Sweeney 08 9248 4432

2 Troop (1967-1968)

M. Ballantyne 08 8298 2515
 John Beningfield 07 4778 4473
 Peter Bennett 0418915550
 Dennis Burge 08 8281 2270
 Kenneth Butler 0414897889
 Harry Cooling 07 4778 2013
 Garry Cosgrove 02 4845 5153
 Geoff Craven 03 5629 5224
 Peter Fontanini 0438 881 940
 Roland Gloss 02 6367 5324
 John Goldfinch 02 6674 0855
 Paul Grills 07 4162 5235
 Ron Johnston 07 3351 1609
 Eddie Josephs 0417882491
 Lew Jordan 03 6397 3261
 Ray Kenny 07 3881 3648
 John Kiley 02 4228 4068
 David Kitley 02 4735 4991
 Robert Knowles 08 9535 6416
 Bernard Ladyman 08 9795 7900
 Warren McBurnie 02 6687 7030
 Stephen McHenry 08 9344 6939
 Eric McKerrow (Silent number)
 Dave McNair 08 9725 2821
 Kevin Moon 0419539174
 Tony Parmenter 0417856877

Brian Rankin 07 4775 5095
 Hans Rehorn 03 5623 5572
 Andrew Rogers 08 8087 5671
 Mick Rowbotham 03 9439 7566
 Geoff Russell 02 6342 1292
 Robert Russell 03 5975 5329
 Brian Sheehan 03 9336 3137
 Carlton "CP" Smith 0448000334
 John Tramby 0428659048
 John Willis 03 9363 7878
 "Snow" Wilson 08 9752 2935

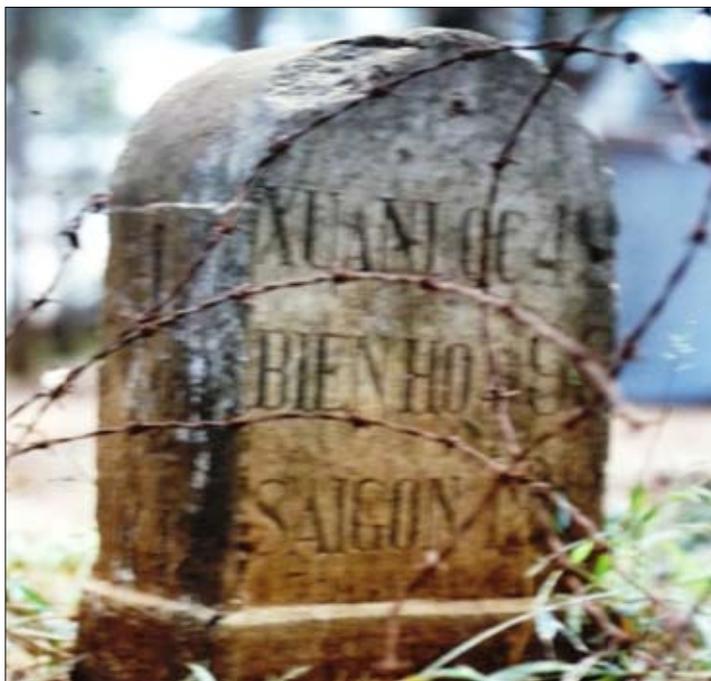
2 Troop (1968-1969)

Janis Atrons +371 2944 6521
 (This is Janis's mobile in Latvia)
 Bob Austin 02 6644 9237
 Ross Bachmann 07 5495 1443
 Don Beale 02 6971 2424
 Richard Branch 0409496294
 Harold Bromley 03 9726 8625
 Peter Brunton 03 5156 5531
 Jim Castles 02 9639 2941
 Harry Claassen 07 3273 6701
 Peter Clayton 0418 823 266
 John Coe 07 4776 5585
 Rod Crane 08 9530 3083
 John Douglas 0433747401
 Robert Earl 02 4990 3601
 Brian Forbes 0412047937
 John Gilmore 08 9795 6847
 Stan Golubenko 03 9361 2721
 Paul Grills 07 4162 5235
 Geoff Handley 03 5593 1791
 Ross Hansen 07 3202 7540
 Wayne Hynson 03 5245 6898
 Ray Jurkiewicz 07 3886 9054
 Brian Lamb 02 6059 6947
 Phil Lamb 08 8564 2001
 Wayne Lambley 07 3851 1837
 Darryl Lavis 08 8263 9548
 Peter Laws 02 4942 8131
 Bud Lewis 07 3881 1230
 Rick Martin 02 6928 4253
 Bill Matheson 0428959044
 Bill Morris 08 9384 2686
 Don Nicholls 02 9579 4126
 Colin Norris 02 4627 1180
 Bob O'Connor 0418742219
 Terry O'Donnell 0417371632
 Rod Palmer 0417672643
 David Pannach (Hong Kong)
 852-2892 2714

Allan Pearson 07 3812 0943
 Gary Phillips 07-5474 0164
 Ted Podlich 07 3862 9002
 Daryl Porteous 07 4973 7663
 Mick Weston 07 5444 3307
 Ray White 03 9740 7141

2 Troop (1969-1970)

"Arab" Avotins 07 4129 8012
 Bruce Bofinger 02 4872 3175
 Frank Brady 02 6555 5200
 David Brook 03 9546 2868
 Jim Burrough 0400884633
 Ron Coman 07 3355 7279
 Kevin Connor 0408 748 172
 Garry Cosgrove 02 4845 5153
 Arthur Davies 07 3408 1556
 Grumpy Foster 07 4041 2321
 Graeme Gartside 08 8725 6900
 Doug George 0419475246



Greg Gough 0417 911 173
 Brad Hannaford 08 8389 2217
 John Hopman 02 9398 5258
 Chris Koulouris 02 4952 6341
 Bill Lamb 0418 424 208
 Mick Loughlin 07 4060 3039
 Mick Lee 07 5543 5001
 Marty McGrath 02 6059 1204
 Jim Marett 03 9824 4967
 Bob Ottery 03 5199 2516
 Bevan Percival 07 5573 6925
 Pedro Piromanski 08 9306 8169
 Ian Pitt 03 5349 2018
 Jack Power 07 4955 3761
 Colin Redacliff 02 9673 0597
 Rolf Schaefer 08 8962 1391
 Brian "BC" Scott 07 3204 5691
 Peter Scott (219) 02 4341 3782
 "Roo Dog" Scott 07 5578 7054
 Les Shelley 07 3264 4041
 Jimmy Shugg 08 9776 1471
 Bob Smith 07 5456 1194
 Mick Van Poeteren 03 9437 7386
 Gerry Wallbridge 03 9803 4223
 Dennis Wilson 08 8659 1189
 Stephen Wilson 07 5538 2179

2 Troop (1970-1971)

Bruce Arrow 02 6288 3872
 Mick Bergin 03 5974 2175
 Graham Besford 03 9439 2661
 Mal Botfield 02 9872 2594
 John Brady 02 6888 1192
 David Briggs 08 9537 6956
 Keith Burley 07 5543 0990
 Peter Cairns 03 6267 4646
 Brian Christian 07 4778 6602
 Grahame Clark 0408533869
 Dennis Coghlan 08 9724 1380
 "Sam" Collins 08 8262 6107
 Ron Cook 03 8787 7377
 Jock Coutts 08 9279 1946
 Bill Craig 08 9530 1008
 Denis Crawford 03 9497 3256
 John Crocker 07 3206 7995
 John Cross 02 4757 2273
 Robin Date 03 9783 3202

Gino De Bari 08 9437 5641
 Tom Dodds 040672260
 Des Evans 07 4128 2390
 Bruce Fenwick 02 4977 2917
 Ray Fulton 03 6288 1176
 Ziggy Gniot 0418 885 830
 Bob Hamblyn 08 8672 3930
 Cec Harris 02 6629 3373
 Paddy Healy 02 4930 7541
 Kevin Hodge 08 8322 2619
 Paul Jones 02 6231 5963
 Jim Kelton 0488972139
 Kevin Lappin 07 3273 8614
 Gary McClintock 07 4788 0123
 Peter McCole 03 5155 9368
 Bob McGlenn 07 5426 1597
 Ian McLean 02 6286 3928
 Jeff Maddock 03 5987 3850
 Leon Madeley 07 5497 1038
 Bill Marshall 07 5545 0389
 Rod O'Regan 02 6550 6068
 Graeme Pengelly 0407 138 124
 Des Polden 03 6223 3830
 Keith Ramsay 02 6585 6503
 Mick Rasmussen 0428 790 645
 Ron Reid 0427 461 297
 Gary Sangster 0427224099
 John Scanlan 0488 132 903
 Peter Schreiber 02 6569 3390
 Garry Shoemark 02 6546 6778
 Alex Skowronski 0407954570
 John Smith 0400032502
 Roy Sojan 08 9926 1235
 John Stonehouse 08 9653 1895
 Peter Swanson 0401392617
 John Tick 04 3898 7262
 Harry Eustace 0408515270
 Steve Walton 07 3205 9494
 Terry Wake 07 4786 2625
 Dave Young 02 4283 3439

2 Troop (1971-72)

Warren Pantall 0417 096 802

3 Troop (1967-68)

Ken Arnold 02 6974 1181
 Dennis Baker 08 89527281
 Chuck Bonzas 0407866487

Bruce Breddin 0418766759
 Norm Cairns 03 6267 4629
 Kerry Caughey 03 5971 4188
 David Clark 08 8388 7728
 Bob Coleman 03 5332 0975
 Jim Dowson 03 5662 3291
 Bob Embrey 07 3351 1222
 Barry Gilbert 03 5023 6657
 Brian Hopkins 0401829744
 John Hoskin 08 8270 3002
 Jack Lawson 0429 798 673
 Peter MacDonald 08 9448 5418
 Barrie Morgan 0437861945
 Michael O'Hearn 02 4932 7509
 Gary Pohliner 0427172900
 Peter Pont 07 4095 0150
 Tom Simons 03 6344 6058
 Kevin Shugg 0411144500
 Mervyn Spear 08 94539232
 Frank Sweeney 07 3882 6025
 Brian Thomson 0428551368
 Vic Underwood 0429 907 989
 Murray Walker 08 9332 6410
 Glenn Weise 0427 741 170
 Mick Woodhams 08 9459 0130
 Bob Yewen 07 5532 4560
 Ken Young 02 9602 5204

3 Troop (1968-69)

Geoff Box 08 9731 2757
 Col Campbell 0417658770
 Barry Chambers 08 8927 8237
 Neil Garrett 03 5798 1522
 Brian Glyde 02 4455 7404
 Peter Graham 0428325182
 Peter Gray 02 4285 8877
 Derwyn Hage 0408802038
 John Hollis 02 6662 6660
 "Sam" Houston 07 5495 5480
 Phil Lamb 08 8564 2001
 Ian Lauder 08 9419 5375
 Kent Luttrell 0408387641
 John Murphy 08 9493 3771
 John Nulty 02 6927 3535
 Ted O'Malley 07 4054 3472
 Barry Parnell 07 4947 1976
 Bob Pritchard 07 4779 0608
 Arthur Richardson 03 9314 8216
 Greg Roberts 03 5941 2269
 Walter Schwartz 0439512322
 Don Shields 08 8297 8619
 Ray Vanderheiden 02 4776 1373
 Wal Warby 0418240394
 Ray White 03 9740 7141

Three Troop (1969-70)

Tony Bower-Miles 0412 317 306
 Chris Brooks 08 9271 2811
 Jim Burrough 0400884633
 Terry Cartlidge 03 5367 1472
 Bruce Crawford 02 6628 0846
 Richard Day 08 8088 4129
 Phil Devine 0439066012
 Bob Done 0407485888
 Ray Fulton 03 6288 1176
 Graham Fromm 08 8532 2561
 Doug George 0419475246
 Graham Harvey 07 5445 2636
 Trevor Hughes 07 5532 3497
 Darrel Jensen 0428387203
 Rod Kirby 07 4973 7726
 Peter Knight 02 6247 6272

Gerry Lyall 07 3343 4725
 Phil McCann 0417423450
 Chris MacGregor 02 4472 3250
 Norm Martin 02 4953 1331
 Jock Meldrum MID 0424924909
 Roelof Methorst 0416834846
 Gary Miller MM 07 5495 5647
 "Jacko" Miller 03 6267 4411
 Chris Muller 07 4653 0457
 Danny Mulvany 08 9356 6890
 Vin Neale 03 9786 1549
 Peter Phillips 0429362935
 G. Rentmeester 03 9735 5236
 Brian "BC" Scott 07 3204 5691
 Paul Scott 02 6656 0730
 Gordon Temby 08 9757 2016
 Peter Thorp MID 02 6288 0008
 "Curly" Tuttleby 02 6681 4133
 Hank Veenhuizen 0407 487 167
 "Wonzer" White 02 9833 0580

Three Troop (1970-71)

Steve Armbrust 07 5545 1073
 Errol Armitage 0427 855 482
 Geoff Ansell 0448 013 712
 Mike Barnett 02 9869 7132
 John Beningfield 07 4778 4473
 Darryel Binns 0417170171
 Trevor Boaden 0448160944
 Mal Botfield 02 9872 2594
 Ian Campbell 03 9870 0313
 Brian Christian 07 4778 6602
 Bob Clare 03 5439 5532
 Graeme Clarke 07 4128 4660
 Ted Clarke 03 5682 2584
 Allan J Coleman 02 9838 4848
 Steve Collett 08 9371 0075
 John Davey 07 3378 4316
 Chris Ellis 08 9398 1718
 Kevin Hodge 08 8322 2619
 Kenny Laughton 08 8297 4010
 Garry Lourigan 02 4844 5545
 R. McKenzie-Clark 08 9729 1162
 Robert McLeay 03 5386 1122
 "Jock" Meldrum 0424924909
 Roelof Methorst 0416834846
 Carlo Mikkelsen
 (New Zealand) 0064 9 3776322
 Ben Passarelli 02 9610 3949
 Robert Reed 07 3351 4440
 Paul Scott 02 6656 0730
 Les Shelley 07 3264 4041
 John Steen 0419772375
 John Tatler 0405188717
 Gordon Temby 08 9757 2016
 Peter Vandenberg 03 9798 3947
 Peter Weingott 07 3378 2770
 David Wilson 07 3855 1370

Three Troop (1971-72)

Trevor "Zip" Button 08 95615363
 Ron Byron 02 6653 4791
 Mike Dutton 0438627140
 Brenton J Smith 08 8536 2923

US Tunnel Rats

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Late news - SME Opening Day

The new School of Military Engineering at Holsworthy officially opened on 26 June, revealing a stunning facility every Sapper in Australia can be justly proud of. The training facilities, the lines and the amenities are world class. The new Australian Army Museum of Military Engineering is an absolute highlight, thanks in great part to the extraordinary skills and efforts of the curator, Sebastian Spencer. PHOTOS (clockwise from top right): Lieutenant General Angus J. Campbell, DSC, AM inspects the troops with CO SME LT COL Ken Martin: The power group muster at the HQ area for the opening ceremony and parade: Huge wall mural photo featured in the Museum - taken in January 1969 it shows Tunnel Rats Sapper Darryl Lavis (left), and Sapper Ted Podlich, both of 2 Troop sitting at the tiller of an assault craft while attached as a Splinter Team to the "D&E" platoon, operating in the waterways and mangrove swamps of the Saigon River Delta: One of the many superb exhibits in the Museum depicting the diverse work of Sappers over more than a century of conflicts. You must make the effort to visit this exceptional museum.

